

Bugged-In In Elko

Chapter 1

John and Sarah lived in a small rural town in North Central Nevada. They assumed they were safe because they had 300 miles of desert between them and any major population centers to the East or West. What they didn't count on was the Virus could be brought into town by a visitor flying in on a junket from the local casino. All it took was one carrier to decimate the entire town. The first to die were Medical providers who were treating Virus patients, and didn't realize they were dealing with a Modern Plague, and it was Airborne! They found out too late to save themselves. Next the Elderly and youngest children died, Then a large part of the schoolchildren got sick and died, except for the ones who were home schooled. John thanked God that Sarah had insisted on home schooling their children. Alex was 15, and Jennifer was 13, and they were both outstanding students. What the State didn't know was on top of all the BS the state forced them to teach, the kids got daily Bible lessons, and daily training in Survival and Preparedness. Sarah covered all the preparedness issues - she was raised on a farm and her parents had lived through the Great Depression, and as a result, Sarah grew up in a frugal lifestyle, and learned how to do everything without all those "newfangled contraptions" as her father called Modern Appliances. Don't get me wrong - they still used all the modern conveniences, but all their spare money went into stuff they bought at Garage Sales and Estate Sales. They had accumulated a large barn full of stuff that didn't need gas or electricity to run. They had several wood stoves, a wood-fired water heater, and a whole bunch of stuff that would come in handy if TSHTF! John and Sarah copied the frugal lifestyle of Sarah's parents, and their favorite pastime was scouring Garage Sales and Estate Sales. They came away with tons of antiques and hand-powered equipment at unbelievable bargains. Sometimes pennies on the dollar. John got all of his gun collection through estate sales, and as such, they had no paper trail in case FEMA or the ATF would come snooping around.

John made excellent money working for the local mine, but unlike their neighbors, who were up to their eyeballs in debt, and had a garage full of toys, they drove good used cars, and didn't buy any gas-guzzling toys. They were able to buy a 50 acre mini-ranch with its own well and septic system. They paid the loan off after 10 years, and now owned it free and clear. They owned 10 head of terminal-cross Hereford/Angus cattle, and had an agreement with their neighbor to share one of his bulls, so John's cows would be impregnated without the cost of maintaining a Bull. In return, John watched his neighbor's ranch, acting as a caretaker when the owner was gone on business. His neighbor had ranch hands and a huge ranch with hundreds of head of cattle, so John didn't have to do much. Sarah convinced John to buy some chickens, pigs, and to plant a large garden of Heirloom variety vegetables that would reliably grow from saved seeds year after year. They even constructed a large greenhouse to start plants early, and converted their whole house to solar and wind power. They only needed to have their 1000 gallon propane tank filled up each year. John took care of that expense out of his Christmas bonus check. They had a large stand of trees on the property, and wood stoves in the house for heat and cooking if necessary. Basically, they were set! John and Sarah used their basement as a storage area for their 2nd pantry and all their Emergency Equipment. John drove a 3/4 Ton Ford Diesel 4x4 pickup to work, and managed to work a deal with the local fuel distributor for a used 2500 gallon Diesel tank for free, since the distributor didn't want to store it while it rusted, and the old ranch where it was had

gone bankrupt and hadn't paid him in 6 months. They installed the tank over by John's barn on a 6 foot pedestal so it could gravity feed, and John bought a used diesel tractor with a PTO generator, a 3-point hitch, and all the implements he needed from another estate sale. John and Sarah were considering expanding their greenhouse and going into aquaculture - they'd read an article in Mother Earth News about Tilapia Farming, and hydroponic gardening. It seemed if you could do it right, you could design a closed circuit system that would feed the fish and the plants using the same water, and just a small amount of fish food to supplement the greens produced by the food. Unfortunately, the Virus hit before they could complete the project. Still, they had expanded their greenhouse, and that would come in handy. John had designed a huge AE System to run his house. He had a 10KAh battery bank, four 5KW Trace TSW inverters (2 full-time and 2 on standby) 4 400-watt 48vdc Wind Turbines, and over 1000 square feet of Photovoltaic roofing panels on his roof generating a maximum of 7KwH of power. During the winter, he was lucky to get 1/3 of that, but the wind was stronger during the winter. He had a 5000 gallon water tank uphill from the house, with a float valve controlling the well pump, and a couple of Shurflo 12vdc RV water pumps to maintain pressure for the house, and a couple more to maintain pressure for the yard and garden.

When the Virus hit, John confined everyone to the property, and told Alex and Jennifer they couldn't see their friends AT ALL until further notice - they could talk on the phone all they wanted, but they weren't to approach anyone who wasn't a member of the family closer than 50 feet! Jennifer screamed that her Dad was killing her social life, and John sat her down and explained to her that if she caught the virus, she'd be dead, and she'd kill her brother and the rest of her family too! "I know you've wanted to kill Alex in the past, but now's not the time!" Jennifer looked up at her Daddy, then gave him a big hug! John did an inventory of their supplies, it could have been better, but it also could have been worse! The Propane was just filled last month, and the diesel tank had just been filled last week. John walked out to the barn, opened a case of Pri-D and added it to the diesel tank to make it last, then added Pri-G to the gas tanks of all their vehicles, and added PRI-D to the tank of his pickup and the tractor. "Rats - I guess I quit the mine too!" John walked up to the house, got on the phone, and told his supervisor that he was taking an extended leave of absence due to the Virus! His supervisor told him that Personnel would direct deposit a check for his accumulated Sick Leave and Vacation, as well as any regular pay they owed him to his bank. John thanked him, and reminded him not to get within 50 feet of anyone he didn't trust with his life! John told Sarah what he had done, Sarah agreed, and reminded John to check the computer tomorrow, and if the check had hit, to pay off their property tax for the next couple of years, then if they had any money left, they'd pay all the bills they could. John reminded her they needed to pay the Propane and the Diesel bill unless she already had. Sarah told John she paid them last month, all the bills were current, and the credit cards were paid off!

John gave Sarah a big hug, and thanked her for being on top of things. Together they surveyed the pantry and the rest of their supplies in the basement. They had over a year's worth of food, and several years worth of seeds, and enough ammo to start a small war! That made John think of something, he yelled for Alex, and as he looked in the door, John told him they would need to blockade the driveway, and dig some vehicle trenches. Alex told John he'd get right on it! Next, John called Jennifer down from her room, and asked her to man the lookout (she pulled the drapes from her window since they faced the road almost 1/4 mile away) and she took her Mini-14 Ranch model out of the closet, loaded a 30 round mag, and set it up on what looked to be a

storage box, but was really a disguised shooting position with 200 pounds of sandbags stacked in it to stop any incoming! Jennifer yelled she was in position, and would keep Alex in sight until he was back in the house, then she reached over, and locked and loaded the rifle. If anyone showed up before Alex finished the trench, she'd make Swiss cheese out of them!

Chapter 2

DATELINE: ELKO, NEVADA 04/01/2008 Jennifer watched as Alex dug a large anti-vehicle trench across the road right behind their fence line with the backhoe and the front loader of the tractor. Since they lived on a dead-end country road that only serviced 3 ranches, they figured they wouldn't get any cars, but just in case, John thought that a large ditch would stop anyone from driving past that point. While he was at it, Alex used the backhoe to dig several trenches adjacent to the anti-vehicle ditch to be filled with punji stakes to discourage anyone from walking around the ditch. While Alex dug the ditch, John was going over their preparations, making sure their FRS radios were fully charged, as well as the rechargeable mag lights they all carried at night. John opened the hidden gun safe in the basement, and took out 4 matching Para Ord P-14 Limited .45 acp pistols, and 3 mags for each gun. They were loaded with Cor-bon 200 gr. JHP "Flying Ashcan" rounds. Then he removed 4 fanny pack kits that had an emergency kit, a quart military canteen with a canteen cup, stove, and water purification tablets. On one side of the pistol belt was a Kydex holster for the Para Ord, and on the other was a Kydex double mag holder, as well as a Randall RTAK knife in a Kydex sheath. Everyone would wear their fanny pack kits 24/7 unless they were asleep or in the bathroom. John inspected the kits, then loaded a mag into each gun, cycled a round into the chamber, then topped off the mag from a box of ammo in the safe, and stuck the "cocked and locked" .45 in the Kydex holster and the 2 full spare mags in the double mag holder. John belted one of the kits around his waist, then walked upstairs to deliver the rest of the kits when the phone rang.

Sarah answered it - "John it's your Brother Bill!" John ran to get the phone, and handed the kits to Sarah, who immediately belted hers on as well, then took the other 2 to give to Jennifer and Alex. Meanwhile, John talked to his brother Bill. "Bill - where are you and how are you doing?" "We're all together in our cabin in Truckee, CA. I need to ask you a major favor - the situation around here is going to Hell in a Handbasket as refugees from Sacramento and San Fag are streaming in here - some of them are infected, and the rest are looting and stealing anything not nailed down! The situation is beyond dangerous, and we need to bug out to your place!" "Any of you infected?" "No Thank God! So far we've managed to stay away from everyone, and with my reputation around here, not many refugees are getting anywhere near us. I just shot a guy yesterday who was trying to break in! I'm sure he was infected, but luckily he was trying to break into the back door, and no one was within 40 feet of him when I shot him. I left the body outside, but he's starting to smell!" "Bill, can you get here?" "We've got the F-250 diesel just like yours with a trailer full of diesel and stuff. I can make it on gas easily, it just depends on the roads! I'm going to have to chance I-80 since the locals have all the secondary roads blocked, and so far the CHP and NHP have managed to keep the road open." "Do you have that safe conduct letter I sent you years ago?" "That's one of the first things I grabbed out of our safe deposit box before the bank closed! I sure hope Law Enforcement officers recognize the name of a Nevada Small Town Sheriff!"

"Bill, he's pretty famous now that he kicked the BLM out of the County! Remember that - they tried to mess with the County over Jarbidge and the water rights. Finally Elko County had enough, and the County Commissioners voted to expel the BLM until they started obeying the law! What was really amazing was when President Schwarzenegger backed them up, and withdrew the BLM from the entire state, and returned all the state land with the exception of the Fed-

eral Military bases back to the State of Nevada by Executive Order! Governor Russell was amazed, and called Arnold to thank him personally! Anyway, now that everyone and his brother knows about him, your Safe Conduct letter should work. I hate to do this to you, but we are going to have to quarantine your family when you get here for at least a week to make sure you didn't get infected during your trip. Make sure you don't get within 50 feet of anyone, and wear your filter masks if you are in doubt. Call us on the cell phone if you can, and keep us posted on your progress. We can't go out and get you, the entire county is infected, and we are quarantining ourselves at the ranch until further notice. You know how we're set up here! Just bring all the food, ammo, clothing and supplies you can, and we'll take care of the rest! I'd get on the road tonight, since most of the scavengers seem to be out during the day! Once you get into NV, don't worry about being visibly armed, Governor Russell has waived all the firearms laws for the duration of the emergency with the exception of carrying in a Casino. That was moot anyway, since all the casinos are closed. Call me and keep me posted!""Thanks John, you don't know how much this means to me!""Don't mention it - what are Brothers for! By the Way, have you heard anything from Mom & Dad?""John, I've got bad news - they died when someone brought the virus into their retirement home. God, I'm sorry to break the news to you this way, but it slipped my mind!""That's OK, Bill - I know they're in Heaven waiting for us! See you when you get here! God Bless and take care!""God Bless you too John, Bye!"

John sat down and cried, both for the loss of his parents, and the possibility that he would never see his brother and his family again, since they were the only family he had left besides Sarah and the kids. John found Sarah and broke the bad news to her, and they hugged and cried for a while. John noticed that Sarah was wearing her fanny pack, and she told John that she had given Jennifer and Alex their kits while he was on the phone. Then Jennifer yelled from her room to ask if Dad was off the phone, she needed to call her friends. John told her to go ahead, then walked into her room to tell her Grandma and Grandpa were dead, that they had died from the virus. Jennifer was crushed, she really loved Grandpa and Grandma, but she knew they were in Heaven. Jennifer asked her Daddy how they died, and John explained that Bill told him someone brought the virus into the retirement home where they lived, and they were all dead within a week!Jennifer wrapped her arms around her Dad, and cried, "I'm Sorry Daddy! I was being selfish when I yelled at you yesterday! I should have known that this virus is deadly, and the only way we'll survive is absolute isolation!""Jennifer, I've got some good news for you! Uncle Bill called, and they are on the way here! So if everything goes well, they'll be here tomorrow or the next day! Make sure you keep them in your prayers, since this trip is very dangerous, but staying in Truckee was even more dangerous according to Bill!""I'm pretty sure they'll make it, Uncle Bill is almost as tough and resourceful as you are!""Thanks sweetheart, let's both pray for them!" Jennifer and her dad knelt on the floor facing each other, holding hands. They prayed silently for about 5 minutes, then said "Amen" together. Jennifer gave her Dad another hug, and John walked out of her room.Sarah accepted the bad news stoically. She knew a lot of people had died, and John's parents were going to have a lot of company before this epidemic was over. John told her that Bill and his family were coming to stay with them. Sarah brightened up at the thought of seeing Bill and his family. John told her they were leaving tonight, and with any luck, and a lot of prayers, they should be there sometime tomorrow or the day after. Sarah looked worried, but said nothing, and went into the basement to inventory supplies, and clear out space for a bed for Bill and his wife. Bill's kids could double up with Alex and Jennifer. John went out to the barn to set up a place they could stay for a week to make sure they weren't infected.

DATELINE: TRUCKEE, CA 04/01/2008 Bill told his family they needed to get packed as quickly as possible, that they were going to stay with Uncle John's family until this blew over. Bill broke out his checklist, made sure everything was packed in his trailer and his Diesel F-250. He just filled the 100 gallon auxiliary tank in the bed of his truck, and both main tanks were full of diesel, so he had plenty of fuel. What no one knew, was that he had custom tanks built with Kevlar lining, and Diamond Plate skid plates and tank guards installed under the vehicle. He had 100 gallons of water in the trailer, and another 10 in the bed of the pickup. The trailer was full of sealed boxes containing food, ammo, clothing, and other bug out supplies. Bill never unpacked the trailer since they left Sacramento last week ahead of the Virus outbreak. When Bill got an alarming e-mail from a survivalist friend of his that hospitals all over the USA were contacting the CDC regarding a mysterious airborne lethal virus, that was all the warning Bill needed! With his "Bug Out Trailer" already packed, his family was out of the house and on the road East within an hour of receiving the e-mail. He filled up the truck and the auxiliary tank at a small self-serve gas station on the way out of town that had credit card pumps so he didn't have to go inside. As soon as they got word, Bill's family put on some -95 paper filter masks that they realized were better than nothing, packed up their Bug Out kits, and high-tailed it out to their cabin in Truckee California. Bill's family were avid skiers, and the cabin was minutes from the best ski resorts. After he hung up the phone, he walked out to the truck, turned on the CB to channel 14 that the local long haul truckers used, and heard about a convoy forming up that would be near Truckee within 2 hours. Bill shut off the CB, told everyone they had an hour and a half to pack everything and be on the road - they were going to ride with a convoy going East on I-80. He hoped it would get a CHP escort to the state line. If it did, it would be smooth sailing. Bill ran back out to the truck, turned the CB on again, and heard a trucker friend of his was going to be in the convoy. Bill jumped in right after his friend stopped talking, and asked him if they could tag along with the convoy. Since Bill was an experienced Diesel Mechanic and an ex-trucker, his friend said that they would love to have him. The convoy was going to Salt Lake City, UT, and would have CHP escort until the State Line, where NHP would take over. They were carrying food, emergency supplies, and medical supplies from San Francisco to SLC, so the Highway Patrol wanted to make sure this convoy got through without any hassles.

Bill thanked him and signed off. His family kept packing stuff into the truck, finally they were all ready with 15 minutes to spare. Bill told everyone to use the bathroom, they were riding with a convoy, and they weren't stopping for bathroom breaks! Bill hit the head as well, put on clean clothes, and said a quick prayer. Finally they all piled into the truck, and Bill double-checked the hitch connection, and the trailer lights. Everything checked out OK, so he started the motor, and hit the road. He waited on the on-ramp for 10 minutes until he saw his friend's rig in the middle of a 30-vehicle convoy. Bill rolled down the onramp, and blended in right in front of his friend's rig, then turned on the CB. "Thanks Good Buddy for letting us in, we're hoping to ride with you guys all the way to Elko, NV. We're going to stay with my Brother until this Epidemic blows over!" "You're welcome Bill, just stay in line ahead of me. I told the rest of the convoy you were tagging along, and they said they could always use an experienced diesel mechanic just in case. These rigs were just serviced in San Fran, so there shouldn't be any problems, but you never know. All our tanks are full, and they're waiving speed and driver rest restrictions to get this convoy through ASAP. We'll hold 60mph until we hit the Nevada State Line, then the NHP has told us we can maintain 80mph until the Utah border, so we are going flying!" "Thanks for everything! I'll keep monitoring 14 in case you need anything. Talk to you later." Bill took his hand off

the mike, and replaced it in the mike holder, then set the volume so that he could hear the CB without it being distracting. Since they were in an official convoy, Bill decided to keep the guns hidden, except his Para Ord P-14 Limited in the console next to him. Once he was in Nevada, it wouldn't be a problem, and they had less than 100 miles to the Nevada border. The total mileage was around 400 miles. He figured 6 hours at 70mph before they got there. 4 hours later, when he was within local Cellular calling distance to Elko, he called John, and advised him they were traveling with an NHP escorted convoy, and barring any major complications, they'd be there shortly after 8:00 pm. John was very happy, and told Bill to call him when he got to town, and he'd call the Sheriff's office to clear the way.

Chapter 3

Dateline: Elko, NV 1900PST 04/01/2008 John's phone rang twice before he picked it up. Bill was calling to tell him they just cleared the Carlin Tunnel and they would be getting off at Exit 301 to head to their house. John told Bill he was calling the Sheriff's office right now to tell them, and not to be alarmed if a Sheriff Cruiser came up behind him with lights and siren - they would probably escort him to their place. Bill told John he'd see him in about an hour, and disconnected. John quickly dialed the Sheriff's Dispatch office, and talked to Rose, the head dispatcher he had known all his life. "Rose, Hi -it's John! I need a favor. My brother Bill has bugged out from Truckee, CA and traveled with a truck convoy here without stopping, I'm sure you got a heads-up about the convoy today. Anyway, they're all healthy and haven't been near anyone for over 2 weeks. They're headed out to my ranch to stay for the duration. If you have a deputy free, could they escort them to our ranch, if not, put out the word that they are OK and to let them pass!" "No Problem Jim, we're a little short-handed due to the virus, but I'll put the word out to let them pass through the blockades. What kind of vehicle are they driving, and do you know the plate number?" "Rose, it's a Tan Ford F-250 just like mine, it's got California plates, and I don't know the number, if it's important, I can give you Bill's Cell Phone Number and you can call him!" "OK Jim, talk to ya later, let me get this out on the radio! Bye for now and you guys take care!" John flipped on his scanner, and heard Rose broadcast the description of the vehicle, and the fact they were OK, and to let them through the barricades since they were headed to John's house. When Rose signed off, John kicked himself - he'd just told Alex to dig a big anti-vehicle trench, now Bill needed to get across. Then he remembered the two large pieces of pierced metal planking that he had used earlier to bridge a streambed across his driveway. He had made a permanent bridge later, and had put them back in the barn. John yelled for Alex, and they ran out to the barn, fired up the tractor, and made short work of bridging the anti-vehicle ditch. Alex ran back to the house to get his AK-47 with the 75 round drum and his LBV/Kevlar Vest. When he returned, Alex told his dad he'd stand guard, and take the bridge down after Bill's family crossed over. Alex pulled the tractor off to the side, and sat in the seat watching the road for Bill's truck while John made final preparations for their arrival. John grabbed his FRS, keyed the mike, and reminded Alex to put his -95 mask on before Bill's truck got within 50 feet, just to be safe! Alex told him he was putting it on right now!

15 minutes later, headlights came down the road, and even though Alex could tell by the sound it was a big diesel truck, he still got his AK in the low ready position just to be safe, with the safety on, and his finger off the trigger. As the headlights swept the tractor, the vehicle stopped, honked twice, and Alex flashed the tractor's lights. The truck slowly crawled across the temporary bridge until it was safely on the ground, then proceeded to John's barn. When they got out, they found a note, and 4 FRS radios.

Bill switched his on, and talked to his brother. "Thank God we made it! Someone was watching out for us, we got to ride with the Convoy all the way from Truckee to Elko, and no one hassled us! I heard on the CB that some refugees that tried to make it on their own were ambushed by some MZB's. They ran into a roadblock and were captured. The women were gang raped, then the whole family were carved up and killed! I almost lost my cookies when I heard about it! No one was able to do anything about it, the National Guard has taken to patrolling the streets of Reno in Bradleys buttoned up tight, and wearing full MOPP gear. I heard rumors the Governor

has ordered the NG to shoot looters on sight. I wonder what kind of damage that 25mm Bushmaster does to a vehicle. When we got to the Nevada State line, the NHP had a surprise for us. Seems some smart person at NHP had realized they might need an armed high-speed convoy escort, so they converted an armored Suburban into a armed convoy escort with a BMG-50 M2 and a TOW hammerhead launcher on pop-up mounts. There were 2 men in the vehicle, and the back was empty except for the guns and ammunition, so I was assuming the passenger was a gunner with some remote firing and aiming control. They had one of those leading the convoy, and one following. One of the truckers was talking to the lead, and found out the armed escorts were capable of over 100 mph, but got lousy gas mileage! It seemed word got out about the armed escort, because we averaged at least 80mph from Reno to Elko and nobody messed with us. They had the fast lane totally cleared of traffic and debris. Anyway, I'm glad to be home, and I'll talk to you after we get settled." "Bill, your family needs to stay in isolation for a week for safety, but the barn has a bathroom with shower, and I hooked up a camp stove to a 20 pound bottle of propane, and another 2 bottles are there with infrared heaters in case it gets cold. You might want to pitch a couple of tents inside the barn for sleeping, to keep warm. Wish I could do better for you bro, but our first priority has to be safety." "Don't worry about it - we love to camp, and the week will pass quickly! Talk to ya later!" While they were talking, Alex had snagged both pieces of pierced metal planking, and was in the process of setting them back in the storage barn, which was on the other side of the compound from where Bill and his family were staying. Alex walked into the house, and John handed him a cup of hot coffee to warm up, and they sat down to shoot the breeze.

Chapter 4

The week quarantine passed quickly, Bill's family quickly set up living quarters in the barn, and except for being cold, they were very comfortable. The morning of the eighth day, John called Bill, who told him they were still all healthy. John told Bill to pack up their stuff, and get ready to move into the house with them. They packed their vehicle within ½ hour, and drove it up to the front door. John greeted Bill, gave him a big hug, and invited him inside. Likewise, Sarah greeted Bill's wife, and the kids grabbed their cousins and escorted them into the house. Sarah had a huge breakfast prepared, and they all sat down at the dining room table. It was a squeeze, but they all made it. When they were all finished eating, John started talking to Bill and Jean. "Bill, we wanted to give you and Jean as much privacy as possible. Unfortunately, that means staying in the basement. The kids will double up for now, since they all have way too much room anyway! Jennifer couldn't wait to catch up with her cousin Lisa, and Alex wanted to talk to Bill Jr., who went by JR.

John reminded the kids that they had chores to do first, and then they could gab as much as they wanted to! First, they needed to help unload Bill's truck and trailer. With much groaning, they assembled in the front drive, and started unloading. As they unloaded the trailer and the truck, John commented on the large Pelican cases. Bill told him that he took John's advice and bought 4 Bushmaster AR-15 HBAR target models with the flat top. He had Leupold scopes mounted to 2 rifles, Aimpoint red dots on the other 2 and 2 Night Vision Scopes for night use. All the optics were mounted onto Weaver rails with QD mounts so they could switch between the different optics depending on the situation. He also had several NVG's in another case, with spare batteries for all the optics that required them. Next came several 50 cal Ammo cans full of NATO spec 5.56mm ammo, some regular 55 gr. FMJ, and some black tip penetrator rounds just in case they needed to punch through a car body. He also had 4 Para Ord P-14 Limiteds just like John's and fanny pack emergency kits for everyone. He also had an ammo box full of Corbon 200gr. "Flying Ashcan" 45acp JHP rounds. John owned two National Match M-1a rifles with Leupold scopes, a spare Night Vision Scope on a QD mount, and several cases of Lake City Match ammo, all from the same lot, so he had the long-range artillery covered. They unpacked cases of canned food, and dry goods packed in 5 gallon buckets. Bill marked all his foodstuffs with smiley faces before he packed them, so in case this emergency didn't last more than a week or two, they would know whose food was whose. Bill planned to share, but between the two families, they had enough food to last several years. They packed all the foodstuffs into the basement, crowding the limited floor space, but they still had enough room to get to the bed, and use the bathroom without tripping over anything. John showed Bill the basement layout, and told him to make themselves comfortable, that the downstairs bathroom was theirs exclusively for the duration. The kids could share the bathroom between their bedrooms, John and Sarah had a bathroom in their master bedroom suite.

Chapter 5

After they got settled, John and Bill walked into the basement for a private chat; Sarah and Jean were talking in the kitchen, while the kids took care of their chores, and caught up on what everyone was doing.

“Bill, I’m going to lay it out to you straight, I’m glad you came, but this is going to get much worse before it gets better. We have plenty of supplies, but from talking to Rose, the NHP dispatcher, I’m afraid so many critical people, Doctors, Nurses, Firemen, Police, Sheriffs, and even Politicians are dead that I don’t see things getting back to normal anytime soon! Frankly, I’d be surprised if it was safe to leave the ranch after a year!”

“John, I know we had our differences growing up, but I agree. I’m so glad you agreed to take us in, or else we probably would have died!”

“Bill, Right now, except for Sarah and the kids, you and your family are all the family I’ve got! There was NO way I was going to abandon you, even if I thought you still are a bratty kid brother and a pest!” Bill laughed at that, and they settled down to plan how to survive the best they could. They made provisions for division of labor, guard duty, and other chores. Since the principal indoor OP was in Jennifer’s room, Jennifer and Lisa would split the day shift, and John, Bill, Alex and JR would take the evening shift with their NVG’s. John decided to move a small propane heater out to the bunkhouse next to the main house, that had a large window facing the road, which was their primary threat axis, since the other sides of his property butted against his neighbor’s 100 acre plus ranch, and the nearest road was over 10 miles away on the far side of his neighbor’s ranch. The county road out front was almost a quarter mile away, too far for the Mini-14 or the AR’s, but John explained to Bill the daytime OP’s job was to Observe and Report, since they might get refugees during the day, whereas anyone approaching the ranch at night should be assumed to be hostile. Bill asked John about refugees, and John thought about that for a few minutes - he didn’t know what to do! He didn’t want to shoot unarmed refugees, but he couldn’t risk his family. Bill reminded him that he spotted a faucet about 150 feet inside the fence line. Maybe he could post a sign that refugees were free to use, but not waste the water from that faucet, but come no closer to the house, that they had no food or medicine to spare. If they came closer, John would fire a warning shot, and if that didn’t stop them, he’d shoot to kill. John knew the county sheriff, and decided to call his house.

“Hello!”

“Sheriff Johnson, this is John Mathews, everyone OK there?”

“So far, can you get to the point - I’m working from home, and I’m busy!”

“Sorry - I had a question about refugees. We’re way out on County Road 387, and I don’t think we’re going to see too many people. My family and my brothers are holed up here for the duration of the epidemic, and we didn’t want to get infected, but we wanted to help if possible. Does the County have a policy about civilians dealing with refugees?”

“John, the best I can tell you is to protect your family. Don’t kill anyone indiscriminately, but if

they threaten your family, or your livestock, do what you have to!”

“Thanks Sheriff! If you need anything, give me a holler - I’m not leaving the ranch until the epidemic is over, but I’m sure I might be able to help anyway!”

“Good Luck and Godspeed John! Bye!”

“Bill, the Sheriff just confirmed what I thought - don’t go wasting unarmed people indiscriminately, but we can protect ourselves and our livestock!”

“John, I wish I’d taken your advice and bought that ranch next to yours when it came on the market! Where I come from, if you even display a gun, the LEOs would draw down on you, then cuff and stuff you - then you’d have to explain yourself to a stupid liberal judge who thought guns belonged in museums!”

John called Alex, the resident artist, and asked him to make a sign for the water hydrant (that’s what they called outside faucets with an anti-freeze design valve) and told him what to put on it. A couple of hours later, Alex showed John his work:

Notice
Feel free to use this faucet - don’t waste water.
Come no closer to the ranch or you will be shot!
We have no food, medicine, or supplies to spare.
You may spend 2 hours here, then MOVE ON!

John was impressed, and liked the wording of the sign!

“Is it OK, Dad - I added the last part myself! I figured the last thing we needed was a bunch of refugees camping on our property!”

“You did good Alex - I forgot about that!” John walked into the barn, grabbed a couple of 1” U-bolts, drilled a couple of holes in the top and bottom of the sign, then walked down to the faucet and affixed the sign to the pipe with the U-bolts.

Chapter 6

Bill talked to John later, “John, I don’t think that sign is going to stop many people. It may make you feel better, but desperate people will do desperate things. We need some more stuff to convince them to stay away!”

“Bill, I’ve thought about that problem almost since we moved here, let’s go out to the garage, and I’ll show you something!”

When they arrived in John’s garage, John swore Bill to secrecy. “If Sarah found out I had this stuff, she’d kill me!” John opened his garage door, walked into the back of the garage, opened a drawer, and did something Bill couldn’t see. A false panel in the back of the garage opened up to a much larger room. Bill thought the garage ended at the hillside, it was now obvious that John had tunneled back into the hill, reinforced it, and built a whole extra hidden storage facility. Bill saw kegs of black powder, ammonium nitrite, plastique, TNT, some chemicals, miscellaneous nuts bolts, nails and other stuff. A couple of long black pipes that were a foot in diameter, rolls of commo wire, det cord, waterproof cannon fuse, hand crank detonators, and boxes of blasting caps!

“John, how did you get this stuff?”

“Whenever a small miner went out of business, I bought his inventory for pennies on the dollar. A lot of the smaller mines used explosives, and I learned from an old miner how to use and store explosives. I knew he knew what he was talking about because he still had all 10 of his fingers, and both arms and legs. I copied the information down, and laminated the sheets to protect them, and put it in binders. I also have several pounds of Aluminum Powder, Iron Oxide, and Magnesium powders. I bought the federal maximum every year for 5 years through different dealers. I got the pipe from a Natural Gas supplier who was closing their Northern Nevada location. They had several sections of high pressure black iron gas pipe with all the fittings, and they basically gave me a truck full of stuff if I’d haul it away, and clean up their yard.”

“John, you could do some serious damage with this stuff!”

“Bill, did you notice the metal mat you stepped on in the way here, and the rubber mats on the floor?” They’re designed to eliminate static electricity and the metal pad discharges any static charge you may have as you enter the building. I’ve got my blasting caps separated from all the explosives, and they all have shunts on them to protect them. I learned from an expert, and I’m not going to make a mistake. This building is blast resistant, and the vents in the roof will vent any overpressure. Let me show you what I was working on before you came.” They walked into a corner of the shop, and there were several pieces of 1 foot black pipe with threaded caps welded to the pipe, and a ¼ inch hole drilled in the cap to feed wires through it.

Bill immediately recognized the pipes as the makings of an improvised Claymore mine. He also noticed the pipes were empty. “Guess you really are careful - none of these pipes are loaded!”

“It would only take 1 day to load all these, and place them. Do you want to help me with these tomorrow?”

Bill looked at his brother, at the pipes, and at the stockpile of explosives “Are you SURE you know what you’re doing - remember when you made that model rocket, and almost blew up the garage?”

“This is different, I’ve been talking to this old miner for over 10 years, and he had been teaching me all about explosives, and what he called “Patriot expedient devices”. It seems that not only was he a miner, but he was in Vietnam and did a tour as an EOD man. He said that after that, working with explosives was a cake walk, and mining was the best way he could use his explosives knowledge. He didn’t own his own mine, but hired out as a blaster to other miners who didn’t want to mess with explosives.” John turned to another part of his “powder house” as he called it, and there was a 55 gallon drum of Coleman Stove fuel, and bags full of Styrofoam peanuts. Bill’s chin almost hit the floor when it dawned on him what John had right there - NAPALM!

“John, are you planning on fighting WWIII?”

“Nope, I just took my Boy Scout Motto literally - “Be Prepared”! I figured if TSHTF, I didn’t want to worry about anyone getting close enough to harm Sarah and the kids!”

“John, if you lit this stuff off all at once, you realize you’d probably blow this hillside down?”

“Speaking of which - Don’t come in here without me! This place is booby trapped in case the ATF raided it! They’d go out with a bang!”

Bill’s eyes got as big as saucers, then his chin tried to hit the floor. Finally, he had to sit down. “You mean this place is wired right now?”

“Yup, if someone breaks in without clearing a device, the minute the door opens the whole place goes up in a Big Bang! I don’t think anything around here for a mile would be standing!”

“Holy Cow John, Have you Flipped?”

“No, I just figured if anyone came in here without me clearing the detonator, it means we were probably already dead, and I just wanted to take some of the SOBs with us!

Bill finally found his voice “I think that would do it! OK, let’s get started first thing tomorrow - just let me make sure my Life Insurance is paid up!” John laughed at that, then escorted Bill out of the powder house, closed the door, which automatically reset the detonator. Bill didn’t know it, but underneath the metal pad was a pressure plate that was wired to a couple of blocks of C-4 with detonators. John had a fingertip scanner mounted in the drawer, and if the light remained red as they opened the door and stepped on the pressure plate, they’d be blown sky high. When John’s fingerprint matched, the safeties were engaged, and the building was safe, even from lightning.

Chapter 7

The next morning, John and Bill opened the powder house, and John walked over to a CD Boom Box he had plugged in to the only outlet in the room, and it was heavily protected. Even the Boom box was inside a Faraday Cage to prevent any stray electromagnetics causing static electricity. He pushed the PLAY button, and seconds later the strains of "AC/DC LIVE" were reverberating around the concrete walls at an almost painful volume level! John explained the next song was his favorite song for times like this, then it came on:

Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap!

The driving bass line got both their heads bobbing like a couple of headbangers. Of course they were too old, they grew up with the WHO and LED Zeppelin! That didn't stop them from appreciating a good headbanging Rock'n'Roll Song! Besides, the lyrics were so appropriate!

John set the black iron tubes on rubber pads with anti-static grounding systems, and John opened his notebook to the page that described how to build a Claymore-style Mortar. First, he fed the end of a long roll of Commo wire through the opening in the back, tied a knot about a foot from the end, and siliconed the hole closed to waterproof it. While he waited for the silicon to cure, he stripped the wires, and took out his mixing pans. Then he told Bill they were going to make 3 different types of Mortars. A shrapnel mortar, a flame mortar, and what he called "Wild Bill's secret recipe" which he explained was a small explosive charge, a layer of improved thermite, a layer of Napalm, topped by a load of shrapnel. John thought it was overkill, but figured if he wanted to get someone's attention, it would do. Meanwhile, he was going to work on some small landmines. He had a design for some "attention getters" that were the size of a toe popper, but not lethal. He pulled out some 12 ga. blanks, a box full of tripwire blank firing noisemakers, and a little doodad that the old miner showed him to convert it to pressure activation. It would take a man's full weight to trip it, and the resulting bang wouldn't hurt anyone unless they freaked out and had a heart attack! He also loaded some of the devices with a more lethal load of a 00 Buck 12 ga. round, just in case they weren't impressed by the noisemakers. He had designed his defense in layers, and the closer you got to the house, the more lethal the defenses got! The most lethal were all command detonated, to prevent accidental detonation. By the end of the day, they had most of their surprises finished, and decided to wait until the next day to install them.

John decided he had better face the music and tell Sarah what they were up to, since the most dangerous phase was finished. He wanted everyone to know where the devices were, and that meant he'd have to tell Sarah about his "toy room", or as she'd probably call it- and what Bill already suggested, his "Mad Scientists' Laboratory"! When he told Sarah, she was very upset, so John did something he had never done in their marriage. He pulled rank on her! "Sarah, I know you're not very happy about this, but I had to protect the family, and that old Miner I was hanging around with told me this was the best way! What would you rather have - Jennifer sitting in her sniper perch shooting hundreds of infected invaders until she ran out of ammo or me scaring off a bunch of them with some fireworks? If they didn't scare, Bill and I made some stuff that would stop them cold!"

The way Sarah looked at Bill would have killed lesser men, but Bill simply studied his shoes! "You mean to tell me you were in on this!"

"I was an accessory after the fact! John already had the stuff in storage; all I did was assist Dr. Jekyll here assemble his toys!"

“I’m still not happy about this - what if Alex or Jennifer accidentally trip one of your devices?”

“First of all, the only devices that can be accidentally tripped are non-lethal noisemakers, the lethal stuff is all command detonated, and can’t go off unless I fire the detonator! Second of all, Alex and Jennifer, as well as Lisa and JR will be shown where the stuff is, what precautions they need to avoid getting hurt, and only Bill or I will be able to command detonate the big stuff. All the non-lethal noisemakers are concentrated between the water hydrant by the road and the house, to remind people to stay away. All the lethal stuff I situated to cover likely avenues of approach if we get attacked by a large group. They’re only going to get used to stop a large group of marauders, not a small group of refugees! The refugees would be deterred by the noisemakers or the other stuff. Bill and I are going to install them tomorrow. I might need Alex’s help to dig holes with the tractor, but I’ll make sure he’s safely in the house when we install these things!”

Sarah was a little more mollified, but still clearly irritated by the fact that John thought he had to hide something from her! She decided now was not the time for an argument, and would talk to John tonight about it! “OK, just make sure everyone but you and Bill are in the basement before you move those things!” and she stalked off to the kitchen. After a while, she told them Dinner was ready. There never was a quieter meal in the Mathews house. After the dishes were washed, John figured Sarah was still mad at him, and he had better get it over with, and gently steered Sarah into their bedroom. Before she had a chance to unload on him, John apologized. “Sarah, I know I was wrong for keeping this from you, but I didn’t know what to do. I was afraid you’d say “NO” and I’d be forced to either find something else, or go behind your back! I’m not happy I did this either, but I didn’t know what else to do! I’m so sorry!”

Sarah realized John’s conscience was hurting far more with self-imposed guilt that she could do by yelling at him. “John, If you had told me, I might have resisted, but we’ve been married all these years, and I think I would have trusted you! What I don’t understand is why you think you have to keep things from me?”

“Sarah, you’re right, and I can safely tell you this is the first and last time that will happen! Please forgive me for not trusting you!” John held out his arms to hold her, and Sarah grabbed him and held on tight! She could never stay mad at John long! When they finally released each other, Sarah asked John about his “Mad Scientist Laboratory”.

“If you want, I’ll show it to you sometime. It’s just a bunch of stuff I’ve collected over the years from miners that were going out of business. There’s some explosives and stuff they use in mines. It just so happens that they also make great defensive weapons. I was just saving it for a time like this. Remember all that time I spent on the Internet, and you accused me of checking out the Internet Porn sites. Actually, I was hanging out on a bunch of Survivalist/Preparedness sites - that’s where I got most of the ideas for all the stuff we have in storage in the basement!”

“John, you could have told me - remember I came from a Frugal background. My parents lived through the Great Depression, and they lived on the same farm all their lives. None of this stuff is new to me - I’m no City Slicker, even though you did meet me at a Big City College - I couldn’t get the education I wanted where we lived. I wanted to be a Nurse, and the nearest col-

lege with a good nursing program just happened to be the one you were going to! Anyway, what's done is done, let's take a shower and go to bed!" After their showers they held each other until they fell asleep.

The next morning after breakfast, Alex fired up the tractor, and grabbed 2 shovels as well. Bill and John met him near the water hydrant. John showed Alex the map where everything needed to be located. John took his GPS unit, a clipboard, and a bunch of surveyor's stakes, and marked each location. Yellow for a noisemaker hole they could dig by hand unless the soil was too rocky, and red for a Mortar location that had to be dug bigger and deeper. John told Alex to dig a 8 cubic foot hole at each of the red markers, and leave the dirt next to the hole so they could refill it, then cut a trench 1 foot deep back to the bunkhouse. Since this whole area was bare dirt, there wasn't any sod to disturb or replace. As Alex started digging the holes, John and Bill started digging 1 cubic foot holes for his IED's. When he was finished, he put a piece of treated plywood in the bottom of each hole. Finally Alex was done, and John told him to go in the house, get everyone in the basement, and turn off their radios until he came in and got them. Alex protested, saying he wanted to help. John told Alex his mother was expecting him, and if he didn't get himself in the basement, they'd both be mad at him! John thanked Alex for the help, and for volunteering, but told Alex he agreed with Sarah, that this was too dangerous for Alex right now! John took the tractor back to the barn, and connected the flatbed trailer to it, then pulled it over to the garage, packed the trailer with all the safety gear he needed for the move, then carefully loaded the mortars first, secured them, then loaded a blastproof box full of the IED's and secured it. John told Bill he had to walk back, since he didn't want anyone near this stuff while he moved it! Bill commented that in this case, a walk was definitely a healthy idea! Slowly, John drove the tractor around to the front yard. First they emplaced the large mortars, ran the leads back to the bunkhouse in the trench using 1 inch PVC as a conduit to protect the wires, then secured the ends with safety shunts inside the bunkhouse, sealed the ends of the mortars, and buried them in the ground, then they took the box of IED's and carefully set each one in it's hole, attached a 50 ft piece of Paracord to the safety pin, laid another piece of treated plywood over it, and covered the plywood with dirt. Once they were all covered, John pulled the safeties using the cords. None of the IED's detonated! So far so good! John carried the pins back to the box, and drove everything back to the garage, then walked into the basement, and told Sarah the coast was clear. Sarah gave John a big kiss and a hug! Surprised, John asked "What's that all about?"

"I had visions of you blowing yourselves sky high, leaving Jean and I widows, and the kids orphans!"

"I'm sorry I put you through that, but the most dangerous part of today was moving them on the tractor, and I did that myself! Wild Bill told me if I was slow, careful, and did everything the same way every time, I'd die of old age with all my fingers and toes! Bill was in little or no danger, and it wasn't any more dangerous for me than working at the mine!" Sarah still didn't let go, then finally broke down and cried. John held her until her sobs stopped, then kissed her forehead. "I love you Sarah, and I'm not planning on leaving you anytime soon!" When Sarah dried her eyes, she went upstairs to finish dinner. John remembered the kids had been slacking off on their schoolwork since the emergency, and turned around to see all 4 of them busily doing their schoolwork! Sarah must have decided to resume their homeschooling lessons down here to take her mind off her nightmarish images! John made a note to himself that Sarah needed some more

TLC in the next few weeks!

Later they sat down to a boisterous dinner, with everyone talking, and plates of food being passed around the table. John was surprised the Sarah was serving some Ranch Style Rib Eye steaks, then figured she was celebrating him not getting blown up. John shuddered, and resolved to treat Sarah extra specially for a while! When dinner was over, they cleaned up, read their bibles, played some board games as a family, then headed to their respective beds.

Sarah came to bed wearing the nightgown she'd worn on their wedding night. John was surprised, but figured this might happen after the way Sarah reacted to him in the basement. John told Sarah he loved her more now than ever, and he was really sorry for scaring her. Sarah told John that this was for her as much as him, that they both just needed each other tonight. No further words were spoken, and none were needed as John turned out the light.

Chapter 8

The next morning the Mathews were in for a rude shock! Sarah turned the radio on to catch the News, and the EBS tones were broadcasting! Sarah yelled at the top of her lungs for John to get in there.

He ran in dressed in his PJ's. "What's going on! I thought we were under attack!"

While John was looking at Sarah, the EBS tones came on again, this was immediately followed by a taped broadcast that Governor Russell had declared a State-wide State of Emergency. This was the step below Martial Law! That got John's attention! It was followed by a taped statement from Governor Russell that Nevada had suffered over 30% casualties due to the virus, and all government services were overwhelmed. The hospitals were ordered shut by the Governor's Executive Order of State Emergency, and all Police, Fire, National Guard and Reserves were subject to Emergency Recall Orders. They had 24 hours to report to their duty stations or they were to be considered AWOL and possibly deserters!

"Yikes, I wonder how many LEOs and firefighters they have left in the state?" John opened the basement door and yelled at Bill and Jean to get themselves upstairs ASAP, but to get decent first! 2 minutes later, they both appeared in PJs and bathrobes.

"What's up John?"

At that point the announcement repeated itself, Bill and Jean heard it for themselves for the first time. "Good thing neither of us is LEO, Fire, or NG! I wouldn't want to be away from my family right now!" After they had settled down a bit, John, Bill, Sarah and Jean sat at the table drinking coffee.

"I hate to tell you guys this, but we're 1 step away from National Martial Law, If President Schwarzenegger gets wind of this, and several other states join NV in declaring a State-wide Emergency, Arnold will be forced to Federalize all the NG troops so that he can maintain order, and the only way he can do that is to declare Martial Law - and if that happens, God Help the USA! We need to post a listening watch on the radios, including the scanner and the short wave. Why didn't I think of this earlier! I'm glad Sarah is such a news hound, or we would have missed this! It also means we are at Yellow Alert from here on in - all intruders are to be treated as potential hostiles. This does NOT mean shoot on sight, but I want the OP's manned 24/7 from here on out, and the shooting perches in them manned as well. It also means we are going to be short on sleep, but hopefully this will blow over soon, or we will get some help! This also means no one leaves the house unarmed for any reason." Sarah called the kids into the dining room, and John explained to the kids what was going on, and what they'd have to do from now on! While he was talking, the message repeated, and he stopped long enough to let the kids hear it, then explained to the kids what it meant.

Jennifer took it the hardest, because up to now, she convinced herself this was just a temporary thing, and she would get her "social life" back soon. Now she realized that her life might never be normal again! John saw she was upset, and got up to hold her, but she pushed him away, ran into her bedroom and closed the door. Sarah turned to John, said "Let me handle this John, I

think I know what is wrong!” Sarah got up and went to Jennifer’s door, knocked and went in. Jennifer was sprawled face-down on her bed bawling her eyes out! Sarah stood by her bed until Jennifer got it out of her system. When she stopped crying, Sarah handed her a box of Kleenex, and sat down next to her.

“IT’S NOT FAIR!!! WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?”

“Jennifer, you didn’t do anything, sometimes things just happen! You can’t be mad at your Dad, he had nothing to do with starting this deadly virus! If you want to be mad at someone, be mad at the Stupid Terrorists that released this bug without an antidote! All your Dad has done is to try to keep you alive through a very dangerous time!”

“I want to see my friends - I haven’t seen Ronnie, Jill, Beth, Steve, or anyone for a week!”

“Jennifer, you CAN’T see anyone! Face to face contact with anyone outside our family could result in your death, and the death of everyone here! Do you want to kill JR and Lisa?”

“No, of course not! Now Alex, that’s another story!” When Jennifer started laughing, Sarah knew she was coming around.

“Remember all those lessons we gave you that you thought were so “boring”? Well, now that information will save your life! All those hours spent on the range, the hand to hand combat classes, all the stuff I taught you about canning, gardening, doctoring, and everything! I’m not happy about this either, John had to turn our home into a Fortress with High Explosives to protect us from invaders. I’m going to tell you something - this is going to get way worse before it gets better, and we had better all be prepared to shoot invaders, and shoot to kill, or else we’ll all be dead! If anyone who’s infected gets within 50 feet of this house, they can kill us all - and there’s no way to tell who’s infected! Your best friend could show up at our door, and be a carrier but not symptomatic. If you got within 50 feet of them, you could get it, and we’d all be dead! I hate to do this to you, but you’re going to have to grow up faster than I wanted. Your childhood ended the day the Virus hit Elko. Now you and Alex have to be relied on as Adults, or John and I will never get any sleep! I love you so much, and I’d hoped you’d have a normal childhood, go to high school, be a cheerleader, maybe the Prom queen, and marry your Prince Charming! Unless this blows over fast - now it looks like it’s going to take at least a couple of years - you’re going to have to put those plans on hold, and help us survive this! John, God I love him, insisted when we were first married that we would set something like this up, try to stay debt free, and plan for our future. Little did I know how right he was going to be! Life as we know it has changed, maybe forever!”

“Mom, I’m sorry - I was just being selfish!” Sarah gave Jennifer a big hug, dried her eyes, and told her to go give her Dad a big hug! They walked out to the dining room, and Jennifer gave John a python-like squeeze and kissed him on the cheek!

“Thanks Dad, Mom explained things to me, and I promise to act like an Adult from now on!”

John looked at Sarah, then at Jennifer, “I’m so sorry sweetie! I know this is hard for you, but it’s the only way we’ll survive this virus! As soon as it’s over, I hope you’ll be able to put this

behind you and get on with your life!”

“Dad, I don’t know if things are ever going to be normal again, but I know that you and mom will take care of me, and we’ll see this through together!”

Chapter 9

Dateline Washington DC, later that morning

“Vy is he doing this to me - Doesn’t he understand that he’s forcing me to declare Martial Law!”

“Mr. President, you have an alternative - you can declare a state of National Emergency, Federalize the National Guard and Activate the Reserves without declaring Martial Law!”

“How do I do that - I didn’t know I had that power!”

“Arnold, excuse me - Mr. President...”

“Ronnie, it’s OK, when we’re alone you can call me by my first name.”

“Ok, Arnold - all you have to do is sign an Executive Order, Congress will be so glad that you didn’t declare Martial Law and send them all packing that they probably won’t object!”

“Ok, Ronnie, get me my aide, I need to dictate this personally - also I want you here to advise me about some stuff. I really feel that law-abiding Citizens should be able to protect themselves, and I don’t want FEMA running roughshod over the Constitution! I remember when I was a Boy in Austria my grandparents told me the horror stories of Hitler’s SS troops and all the stuff they did when the German Constitution was suspended during WWII! I refuse to be the President that allowed Innocent Civilians to be slaughtered by out-of-control Jack Booted Thugs! Matter of fact - get the Directors of FEMA, Homeland Security and the ATF in here right now! I want it to be Crystal Clear to them that if I hear of any JBT’s harming civilians, I’ll Shoot them personally!”

“Mr. President - You can’t talk like that!”

“The Hell I can’t! I only wanted to serve 1 term - and clean out the cesspool that DC has become! Remember all those Campaign Promises I made - Well I MEANT EVERY ONE!” Anyone found guilty of Corruption in Office, whether it’s in the Congress or any other branch of the Federal Government, and I’ll personally TERMINATE them!”

“Arnold, What about Civil Service Rules?”

“Ronnie, you know the beauty of all this - I can slip a clause in this EO suspending ALL Civil Service Rules for the duration of the Emergency! I can fire or hire anyone I want!”

“Dang, Arnold - for a Muscle Bound Old Out-of-Work Actor, you’re pretty smart!”

“You know Ronnie, Ronald Reagan was pretty smart too! No one gave him credit, but one of the main reasons the Wall fell was that Ronald figured out how to destroy the USSR, not from without, but within! Smart Guy! Any way, let’s get this EO written - I want to go on National TV and Radio tonight to address the Nation.”

Dateline Elko, NV - later that day

“John, come quick - the President is about to give a speech! I want the kids to hear this too!”

As they gathered around the radio, Sarah turned up the volume so they all could hear it. Then the Announcer told the audience that President Schwarzenegger was going to be addressing the Country live in 5 minutes.

Arnold's voice was the next thing they heard:

“Citizens of America, I address you tonight with a heavy heart because of all the deaths due to this Terrorist Attack! I promise you our best microbiologists, Research Institutes and our entire Pharmaceutical Industry are working on a vaccine 24 hours a day as we speak - I have authorized a Crash Program to find a cure for this virus - no expense will be spared! But that is not why I decided to address all of you tonight! As you know, the situation is quickly getting out of control, since the first people killed by the virus were medical workers, police, fire and ambulance workers. These people cannot be easily replaced, and the only people qualified to take over are the military, including Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve. Therefore I have federalized all National Guard forces, and activated all Reservists for the duration of the emergency. I have issued Emergency Recall orders to all Active Duty forces overseas. They have orders to return to the USA as fast as possible, and to bring their equipment with them. I have also federalized all heavy Airline Cargo planes and all Railroad Cargo systems to get forces in place to meet this disaster. I have NOT and Will NOT declare Martial Law - I remember growing up in Austria and my Grandparents telling me the Horror stories of the Nazi Storm Troopers abusing citizens with their Power-mad behavior! Therefore, I have personally told the Directors of Homeland Security, FEMA and the ATF that if I get any word of Citizens being abused by either agency - I will TERMINATE them personally - and I don't mean Fire! They assured me they will take personal control of their agencies, and disarm and fire any rogue agents who were allowed to run amok by previous administrations! I also ordered that all law abiding citizens were to keep their firearms for self-defense, or defense of this great nation if anyone makes the mistake of trying to invade. I remember a famous Japanese General who was interviewed after WWII, and was asked why Japan didn't invade the US - he said “There would have been a rifle behind every blade of grass!” Well - he was Right - Just like at Concord and Lexington, the people of the US will NOT allow a foreign army to invade. I have told the UN to butt out, and if they send any troops, I have ordered the Joint Chiefs to defend our shores vigorously! We will allow foreign aid workers, but they will be unarmed, and under direct control of US military forces. The International Red Cross is sending emergency supplies, but since this is world wide, I'm not expecting much help from the rest of the World. I will NOT tolerate lawlessness, and I expect homeowners to defend their own property and families! I urge people to remain in their homes as much as possible, and my medical people have told me that we have a huge supply of specialized filters for gas masks that will stop viruses cold! All Emergency Workers and Military will be issued these filters. We will be posting information on this radio station from FEMA about any expedient filters civilians can use that will work against viruses. Your best solution is not to approach anyone else closer than 15-20 feet without FEMA or OSHA approved filter masks. Parents, I have to stress that you cannot let your children play outside in public areas. As you know, viruses like the common cold can survive on surfaces, and all your little boy or girl has to do is touch the surface, then their eyes or mouth, and they can get infected. FEMA will also be posting a list of approved disinfectants, but I know bleach will work. This is all for now, but we will be keeping you updated! God

Bless the United States of America! Hasta La Vista, Baby!”

When the Presidential Address was finished, FEMA came on the air with some information. Most of it was barely useful, since no one had large stocks of Chlorine bleach, Hydrogen Peroxide, or Providine Iodine. Sarah took notes anyway, since they did! The list of FEMA and OSHA approved filter masks and respirators was very helpful! Sarah wrote down the numbers of the filters to compare with her stock. John let the entire speech sink in, and overall, he was feeling better! John was afraid Arnold would have taken the easy way out and declared Martial Law, but evidently his childhood memories in Austria affected him and he decided to come down on the side of Law and Order, and rallied the citizens of the USA behind him. John just hoped that Arnold would survive this emergency, and someone wouldn't attempt a Palace Coup to get rid of him so they could run things. John thought about that, then remembered that Arnold and Sly Stallone were the charter members of the Los Angeles Gun club, and Arnold was reputed to be an excellent shot. He read an article in a Gun magazine that Arnold preferred .45s, especially the Para Ords! Arnold was big enough to carry the P-16 with the full-size mag, and carry it concealed! Whoever wanted him out of the way had better be careful! John wondered what Arnold meant by Terminating the SOB's. John hoped he meant "Terminate with Extreme Prejudice"! Sarah and Jean got dinner ready, then they sat down to eat dinner. Bill said grace, then they ate quietly. After the dishes were washed, everyone was busy with indoor projects until bed time. Alex and Jennifer were both surfing on the Internet. At 10:00, John told the kids to get in bed, and they followed shortly. Sarah was too tired to do anything more than cuddle, but John wanted to hold her anyway - so everything worked out great. They fell asleep in each other's arms.

Chapter 10

Dateline Carson City, NV The Next Morning

“Governor Williams, please hold for Governor Russell!”

“Jim, its Warren - how’s it going?”

“Warren, I’m very busy right now, I’d love to talk - what’s on your mind?”

“Jim, President Schwarzenegger’s speech last night got me to thinking. If he’s serious, we should conference call him with a couple of ideas I have.”

“OK , Warren - lay it on me!”

“First of all, we could ask Arnold if he could amend the order Federalizing NG and Reserve troops so that they serve in their home state wherever possible - it would reduce costs for one thing, and they know the lay of the land. Also, I can imagine what a headache you would have over a bunch of heathen city slickers in Downtown Salt Lake City! I know you’d rather have troops from the area instead! Also, it should cut down on any problems with soldiers abusing civilians, since they live where they are stationed, and if they hurt anyone, they will have to come home and face the music!

Secondly, I was going to ask Arnold to NOT send FEMA and Homeland Security Agents into Nevada - matter of fact, I was going to insist! The way some people feel in Rural NV, they’re liable to get shot if they started throwing their weight around! I mean we could use NG and Reservists troops more than FEMA and the other JBT’s!”

“Warren, this is amazing - I was just going to call you about the same issues. I’m not too happy about losing my NG troops! Maybe if Arnold allows some of them to stay and reinforces them with Reservists? I think that would solve our problem. Hold the line while connect to DC!”

“Mr. President, I have Governor Russell from Nevada on the line. We have a few requests, and know you are busy, so I’ll be brief. Warren just called me up to ask about these issues, and we are in agreement. If you could do these things for us, we’d be grateful!”

“OK, Governor Williams, I’m listening!”

“First of all, we’d appreciate if you could assign National Guard troops based on the state they live in. This would do several things: 1) it would reduce transportation costs and hassles, and 2) it would eliminate any friction between forces and civilians, since these people know each other and 3) They already know the lay of the land and would be able to get to work quicker, without spending time getting oriented. Our Second point, is neither of us wants FEMA or Homeland Security Agents within our borders. Our rural citizens are liable to shoot any agent who starts throwing their weight around! Besides, we would be better served if Homeland Security concentrated on securing the US territorial borders, and we really don’t need FEMA, our people are pretty self-sufficient and into preparedness. As you know, Mormons are told to keep a year’s supply of food on hand, and most of them also store water and other emergency supplies as well. I know Nevada is in a similar situation, since there are a lot of Mormons in Nevada, and everyone in the Rural areas is very self-sufficient. We agree that the National Guard and Reservist troops should be sufficient for anything we need right now!”

“Jim, you must have read my mind! The last thing I want is a Civil War, and some of those hot-heads in FEMA act like they own the country! I’m halfway tempted to fire the head of FEMA, but I think they can do some good in the Eastern United States, especially the big cities.”

“I agree, Mr. President, just make sure to keep them on a tight leash!”

“Jim, Warren, I’ll have my National Security Advisor fax over to your offices a draft copy of the amendments to my Executive Order, if you have any questions, call him direct. I promise you I will implement your suggestions! Hasta La Vista, Baby!”

“Warren, you still there!”

“Jim, I’m in shock! This guy’s supposed to be married to a relative of the Kennedy’s?”

“Maybe he got conservative in his old age! He sure is talking like a Conservative! I can’t wait to see that EO draft!”

“Me either, Good Luck Warren, Let’s keep in touch! Bye!”

Governor Russell sat in his office chair, as his heartbeat slowly returned to normal. Would Arnold really do it? God- he hoped so! Warren got up, told his aide he was not to be disturbed, and went into his private bathroom to pray. He kneeled at the countertop as he did every day. He knew it was safe to pray here, because the security people didn't bug the bathroom! "Dear God, I'm not praying for myself, but for this State and the Nation. Please protect Arnold and Jim, and take care of everyone who is missing family or friends. Please guide our leaders to do your will, and please have mercy on our land! Amen!" When he got up, Governor Warren Russell felt as if a weight was lifted from his shoulders. He hoped that draft EO would show up quick so he could call a press conference to address the State. He sat back down at his desk, paged his aide, and told him that he was back, and to please be on the lookout for a fax from the White House, and to get it onto his desk ASAP, or to call him wherever he was when it arrived. He also told him that if he got a call from Governor Jim Williams from Utah, or the President or his National Security Adviser to put the call through!

Two hours later, the office door opened, and Governor Russell's aide walked in with a multi-page fax. "Sam, get the State Attorney General in here ASAP! I need him to go over this draft with me!"

"Yes Sir - he's right down the hall!"

Two minutes later, there is a knock on the Governor's door, and the State Attorney General enters his office. "Governor, what's up?"

"Steve, I need you to review this draft EO for me and tell me what it says, I just got off the phone with the President, and he promised to assign NG and Reserve troops based on their home base, and to tell FEMA and Homeland Security to stay the Hell out of NV and Utah!"

"Warren, you don't need me to review this - it's written in Plain English! I think President Schwarzenegger wrote it himself - or at least dictated it!" The AG handed the fax back to the Governor, who read the fax, and jumped up and hugged the AG, who looked very confused!

"Hot Damn! Arnold was good to his word! This EO says exactly what he said he would do. FEMA and Homeland Security are restricted to only working in states that specifically request their help, IN WRITING! It also directs the Pentagon to deploy NG, Reservists and Active Duty forces as close to their home base as possible! WOW! What's this "State governors retain full authority to maintain law and order, and provide for the welfare of the citizens of their states!" I don't believe it! If Bill Clinton were in Office, FEMA would be running things, and we'd be taking orders from the State FEMA directors! I need to call Arnold's NSA right now, and get his OK to tell the people of NV!"

Governor Russell placed a personal call to President Schwarzenegger's National Security Advisor. After a brief call, he got permission to hold a news conference at 6:00 pm local. Ronnie told Warren that Arnold would go on right before him to break the story, and explain to the people what he was doing. Warren had no problems with that, he was just glad that Arnold seemed to be a man of his word! "Maybe I misjudged him! THANK YOU GOD!!!"

Chapter 11

Dateline Elko, NV later that afternoon

Sarah was listening to the radio, when the Announcer told the audience that President Schwarzenegger was going to address the Nation at 6:00pm Eastern. Sarah looked at her watch, and noticed that it was about 2:45pm. She called everyone into the Kitchen where the radios were, and told them that Arnold was going to give another speech.

At exactly 3:00pm there was a brief announcement introducing the President, and then they heard Arnold's voice on the radio:

"Fellow Citizens of these United States. I have a brief update to my speech the other day. Several State Governors have called me expressing concerns over my speech. Frankly, I agree with them, and have modified my Emergency Order to reflect the following:

FEMA, Homeland Security, ATF and several other Federal Agencies have been restricted to only operating in states that have specifically asked for their help, IN WRITING! Past administrations have tolerated their abuses of power. Those abuses have come to an end. It seems the Federal Government has forgotten they work FOR the People, not the other way around!

The Pentagon had been ordered to deploy National Guard, Reservist, and Active Duty troops as close to their home bases as possible. This was done for several reasons. The main one was a cost-savings, as well as keeping local troops that know the area and the people in their home area whenever possible.

Finally, I have decided to have State Governors responsible for the welfare of their own states. In the past, FEMA would have run roughshod over everyone, creating animosity. We do NOT need another Civil War!

The Military is capable of restoring order, and basic services, but they will need volunteers with the necessary skills to repair and maintain critical infrastructure. We will NOT draft civilians besides Health Workers who are already subject to draft during a National Emergency. Unfortunately, most of those workers are dead, and their jobs are being assumed by the Military where possible. We will provide protective gear for any volunteers at Government cost. If you have skills essential to maintaining Water, Electric Power, or Telephone Service we ask you to call into work, and let them know you are available. In the event telephones are not working, try to get in touch with a City or County representative. The Emergency Relay Systems are now in effect, and alternate communications will soon be available if telephone systems are down. Please stay tuned for updates from your State Government."

Shortly after his speech ended, Governor Russell got on the radio.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. Nevada is in bad shape, but we can rebuild. As you've heard, President Schwarzenegger has left the State Government in charge of rebuilding the damaged infrastructure, and restoring order. Luckily, Nevada is just suffering from a lack of maintenance. If we can get workers back to the Power Plants, Water Treatment facilities, and Telephone operating systems, we can be back up and running within weeks. We also request anyone with medical experience to contact local authorities. I still insist that anyone not directly involved in these areas stay at home where you are safe until we give you the "all clear" that the virus has died out and

no further contamination exists! Please pray for Me and those in government that we may make wise decisions in the coming months. Also please pray for the aid workers, that no one else gets sick while volunteering to help rebuild this great state. I have signed an executive order stopping all collection activities for the duration of the emergency. I will not allow someone to lose their house just because we were attacked by a bunch of terrorists! Sheriffs will be ordered to disregard any court orders foreclosing on property that was not in foreclosure before the start of this incident. I am further requesting the Good Citizens of Nevada help the National Guard and Active Duty Military forces maintain order - I fully expect any Nevadans with military skills and suitable weapons to form local militias to defend against looting and property damage. I am NOT issuing a hunting license, and anyone found illegally killing innocent people will be dealt with severely! In areas that the National Guard troops have control of an area, local militias will be under National Guard control, and subject to lawful orders of National Guard officers. Please use common sense; there will be refugees from other areas or other States that have been devastated. All they want is food, water, and shelter. If you have the capability without endangering your family's survival, please assist as possible. Any food banks with food and water storage, please distribute what you can, and keep track of what you gave away in case we can reimburse expenses later. Due to the nature of the attack, do not expect any deliveries of food from outside your local area. The state director of Emergency Services will talk to you now with a list of suggestions that you should follow. Thank You and God Bless!"

John looked at Sarah, who was crying "Thank God we voted for this guy! It sounds like he's got his ducks in a row and his priorities straight. We really don't have to worry about forming a Militia or volunteering to help since we're so far in the sticks. It's just nice to know that he's not ordering confiscation of "hoarded" food and water, and a general confiscation of weapons like Bill Clinton would have!"

"John, I think you misunderstood me, these are happy tears! We've got a devout Christian for a Governor, and a President who obviously listens to his Governors. I'm very hopeful we will come out of this stronger as a Nation, not weaker as those Terrorist SOBs hoped! I'm going to start dinner; can you check that the kids are doing their homework?"

"OK, Sarah - I'll do that. Anything Else?"

"Just give me a hug!" After he gave his wife a hug, John trotted down to the basement to find the kids hard at work. John looked over what they were studying, and realized that most of them were reading old History books that were printed prior to 1960! John was amazed that such books were still available, but glad they were. Alex was reading the text of the original Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and the Federalist Papers. John knew his son would get a much better education than what passed for education at what he called "Juvenile Primate Detention Facilities"! Alex had already qualified for Advanced Placement at UNR (University of Nevada Reno) where he wanted to study Engineering. He wasn't even 18, and he already passed his GED test with a 90% score. He was going to take his SAT exams this fall until the attack happened. Alex took the PSAT last year, and scored in the top 1%! Whoever said that Homeschooling didn't work wasn't paying attention! If you concentrated on the Basics, instead of Social Engineering and Political Correctness, Kids had an enormous ability to absorb and retain knowledge.

Already, Alex was a good enough shooter to shoot NRA Expert, and had won the local NRA long distance shooting competition, despite entering the Adult division since he so thoroughly decimated the Junior competitors last year! Jennifer was rapidly following in her older brother's footsteps. While she didn't have the raw brainpower of her older brother, she applied her self more diligently, and studied harder. She was in the top 5 in the Junior category at last year's NRA long distance competition, and would have won except for one wind-induced flyer. Sarah was proud of them both, and was hoping this would all blow over soon so her children could get back to a normal life!

Dateline Washington DC, later that Evening

After his speech, President Schwarzenegger met with his Cabinet, and was discussing the Terrorist Attack that had caused the outbreak of the deadly virus. His CIA Director was talking.

"Mr. President, we have been unable to locate anyone remotely responsible for the terrorist attack. I'm sorry, but between the virus killing almost everyone in some villages, and my local informers as well, and the ban on international travel, we're dead in the water!"

Ronnie, his National Security Advisor picked up the dropped ball.

"Mr. President, We do have a target, it may not have been directly responsible for the attacks, but they encouraged, trained, and funded them. I'm talking about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia! Members of the Royal Family have been secretly and not so secretly donating millions to radical Watabe Mullahs who in turn recruit disenfranchised teenagers, and turn them into terrorists! We're not sure where they got the bug, but we do know for a fact the Watabe sect of Islam is the one that is pushing the "Jihad" against the West! We have locations on several prominent Mullahs, and we have the capability of surgical aerial strikes using B-2's and JDAM bombs. They'll never know what hit them!"

Arnold's Secretary of State spoke next, Arnold always considered him a hanky-waving peacenik, so he didn't pay too much attention to him - he was on the cabinet for political reasons, besides someone had to run "Faggy Bottom" as he called it!

"Mr. President - Islam is a Religion of Peace! You cannot kill innocent Mullahs, that would be like killing the Pope!"

Arnold had just enough of his BS, and wasn't in the mood to listen to more!

"Religion of Peace - My ASS! Ronnie's right, we need to counterattack and cut the head off this snake while the head's still exposed!"

His Secretary of State interrupted "Mr. President, I object! I will not back this attack on innocent civilians!"

"Great, You're Fired - guess what! Since this is a National Emergency, I'm going to hold you incommunicado at a CIA safe house - you're too dangerous to be let loose! Ronnie, could you make the arrangements! Get this sniveling whiny-ass Liberal out of my sight!"

The ex-secretary of state was dragged kicking and screaming out of the White House by the Secret Service. meanwhile, Ronnie conferred with the Director of the CIA, who gave him the location of an available Safe House. Ronnie whispered to the Secret Service Agent, who continued dragging the Ex-Secretary out by his lapels.

The Secretary of the Interior said, “Was that really necessary?”

Arnold replied, “Why, do you want to join him!” The Secretary of the Interior clammed up in a heartbeat, and wasn’t heard from for the rest of the meeting!

“Ronnie, set up the arrangements for this attack! I want those mullahs dead within the week. Try to limit collateral damage, but make sure you Get those SOB’s! This doesn’t leave this office - use the Black Project funds, and coordinate through the military commands necessary yourself! I don’t want word of this to get out before we have a chance to eliminate them!

“Yes Sir!” Ronnie turned to the JCS Generals present, and handed them a red-labeled file. “Operation Payback” had just commenced!

Chapter 12

Later the next morning, the CO of AFSOG, a “deep black” program headed by the White House and the National Security Adviser, was reviewing a printout from the secure printer. He had just received the coded message that would activate his command.

AFSOG was set up with one thing in mind - Bypass Congress when things and people needed to get blown up or disappear! Congress leaked worse than a sieve, and even the Pentagon was penetrated by Foreign Agents. President Schwarzenegger’s National Security Adviser spent his 20’s and early 30’s in Southeast Asia working for MAC- SOG. He wasn’t a “teacup commando” as so many SEALs had become in the years after Vietnam. He was an Operator, it’s just that what he had done during the Vietnam War could never be acknowledged or even denied. “It Never Happened” was their favorite phrase. They were the original “Men in Black”! After the war, he rose through the Agency, always staying on the Operations side, never out of the field for more than a few months at a time, until his promotion to DDO. Arnold, who respected and knew most of the Special Operations operators from their consulting in his Action Movies, hired Ronnie out of the CIA to be his National Security Advisor. He had the respect of the Military, and those few in the top echelons of the CIA that had an idea of what he had done. Ronnie as he was called - but few believed that was his real name, was a “can do” kind of guy, and if America needed a job done, he was Arnold’s “Go to Guy”! He stepped on all kinds of toes, but he figured he was there to do a dirty job, and he didn’t really give a RA about the bureaucrats that he stepped on, squashed, and generally either went around, over or through to get his job done. Like Arnold, he figured he was only going to be there for one term, and the beauty of it was since he was not planning on staying, it didn’t matter if half of DC wanted him DEAD, and the other half wanted to kill him themselves!

The National Security Advisor’s message got General Tofflemier’s pulse racing! “It’s about time SOMEONE did something about those duplicitous Saudis!” he thought. He had at his command all the latest toys in the USA’s inventory, even “experimental” aircraft and weapons that hadn’t even been bought by the Pentagon. AFSOG’s cover mission was weapons testing, but what they didn’t tell anyone was the main reason for AFSOG was the dormant Operations side, but that was about to change! AFSOG was based at Nellis AFB, also known as Dreamland, which was the perfect cover for a “deep black” program - hide a deep black operation inside another black operation! He turned on his computer, reviewed the inventory, and selected the weapons and delivery system the NSA had advised. As usual, Ronnie was right on the money! He had 2 B-2 Stealth Bombers in the inventory, currently undergoing upgrades to their communications suites, and 2 Stealth Tankers (didn’t do much good to have Stealth Bombers if their tankers were visible on every radar in the area). He reviewed his available weapons systems, and selected the tried and true JDAM bomb with a 1000lb warhead. They were working on a 500lb model, but it was unstable with all the stuff they had to bolt onto it. The new JDAM had GPS, Laser, and Radar targeting systems. It was basically a “drop and forget bomb” that needed no further guidance from the bomber, and could be dropped from up to 60,000 feet. It could also act as a stand-off weapon with certain modifications. The weapon was available in 3 variants: 1) Conventional 1,000 pound 2) Delayed detonation “penetrator” and 3) Mark 82 thermonuclear weapon (selectable yield of 1-5 MT) In this case, they were going with conventional bombs, since the target wasn’t in a hardened shelter, and they didn’t need the nuke (Too bad! he thought - maybe if we

nuked Mecca they'd get the hint?) General Tofflemier completed the paperwork for the mission, issuing a tentative GO for 3 days from now. The "bonebreaker" worked at night, and due to the time difference and distance they would have to travel, three days from now was the absolute minimum. He sent the file back to Ronnie's office via the secure link, then went about the rest of his day, unaffected by the anthill his orders had kicked over.

The next morning, the CIA director and the NSA met with President Schwarzenegger. "Sir, we have an update on the situation in Saudi! It seems those duplicitous bastards are involved deeper than we thought! We found financial records of direct payments of 10 million dollars to Al Quaeda 6 months before the attack, as well as 5 million to Iran's Head of Secret Police, who controls Iran's biowarfare program. In other words, when they were "helping" us beat Saddam Hussein, they were planning at the same time for the downfall of the "Great Satan" as they refer to the USA!"

"Ronnie, do you agree?"

"Mr. President, I've seen that data, and when I was still in CIA, we knew the Saudis were using us to take care of Saddam Hussein, who they saw as a thug, while they paid off the Watabe Mullahs who threatened to stir up trouble in the kingdom. I don't know if King Faud was aware of this, but we're sure several key members of his family were!"

"OK, Ronnie, I'm modifying my previous orders, I still want those Mullahs to have a premature meeting with Allah, but I also want a 2nd B-2 orbiting Saudi with Mark 82's just in case we need to nuke Riyadh! How long can we keep the B-2 aloft over Saudi?"

"Mr. President, the only limiting factor is the fatigue of the crews. We can keep it flying indefinitely, but eventually, the crews need complete rest, and the tanker craft only carries enough fuel for both of them to loiter over the target for 48 hours. The main reason I wouldn't have a B-2 loitering around is they are visible during daylight!"

"Ok, where's the nearest base we can safely stage them out of in case they need to be there more than overnight?"

"We just completed a Top Secret bunker at Diego Garcia, the planes can be hangared and maintained there. But, if you do that, the deniability of the mission goes right out the window -too many people will see the B-2 and the Stealth Tanker!"

"OK, how about if we put the second bird on standby, and if the Saudis give us any trouble about taking out the Mullahs, we know they are dirty, and we can go in the next night - will that work?"

"Let me check with General Tofflemier, and I'll get back to you!"

"Wait a minute Ronnie - I'll just give you a tentative GO on the second mission. If they can do it, have them load the bird, and the weapons, and wait for a final GO from me."

"Thanks, Mr. President - that makes my job much easier!"

Chapter 13

General Tofflemier received an additional message minutes after the White House meeting ended. He was very pleased by the contents of the new message! The White House wanted him to activate both B-2s in his program, arm one with conventional JDAMS and the other with thermonuclear JDAMS. He thought a JDAM package was overkill on a thermonuclear weapon, but it also increased the stand-off distance, making the drop safer for the plane and pilot. No one wanted to get any closer to a nuclear blast than they had to! He called up his previous order on his personal computer, and made some corrections. Sending the B-2s in like this would stretch his group to their limits, since he only owned 2 B-2s and 2 Stealth tankers, and he needed one of each for each mission. If there were any mechanical problems, the mission would have to be scrubbed. He noted the op order to make sure the maintenance people knew that they had to have these planes 100% mission capable within the next 24 hours. He hoped the avionics group had finished installing the new communications gear. Not even the Air Force had this new equipment! It allowed two planes to send voice, data, and pictures between each other, and was fully encrypted, jam-proof, and undetectable from the ground. Once it was installed in the rest of the Air Force's aircraft, and eventually the Navy and Marines as well, they could all talk to each other like they were on the telephone, sending data and images as well. It would revolutionize warfare as we knew it! Any pilot could download the radar image from any other plane, and the computer would then use the new data to plan an attack or dogfight. Heck, when this was installed, Dogfights would cease to exist as they knew them, and the Navy would be able to reintroduce a new long-range missile like the Phoenix with a few interesting twists! It would no longer require the aircraft's radar to guide it, and it would become a fire-and-forget over-the-horizon weapons system. An AWACS could orbit the battlefield, detect enemy aircraft, and digitally assign targets to various aircraft. The missiles would be programmed with the coordinates, heading and speed of the enemy aircraft, and would simply fly to where the airplane should be when they got there! It would then use a small radar and infrared seeker to locate the enemy aircraft and destroy it. Grumman Aircraft would love it, because the Navy would be forced to scrap all their new short-range aircraft like the JTSF and all the other stupid ideas Congress had come up with, and buy a whole bunch of upgraded F-14 Tomcats since no other aircraft in the inventory could carry the huge Phoenix missile. Maybe even the Air Force could get into the act! General Tofflemier always appreciated the ability to kill his enemies before they could kill him! Basically, he took the job at AFSOG to prove to the brass hats running things that they were going the wrong way in weapons development, and he had the aircraft, pilots, and weapons systems to show them the error of their ways!

Dateline Elko, Early Afternoon 04/20/2008

The kids had just come in from doing chores when the phone rang. John wondered who it could be. It turned out to be the rancher next door, asking if they're OK. John chatted with him a while, comparing notes and making plans. Randy told John he needed to get some cattle to market soon, and the butcher had told him to wait until the emergency was over. John asked him how many head he needed butchered. Randy told him he had about 10 steers he needed slaughtered. John did a little mental arithmetic and figured that was about 5,000 pounds of meat, but freezer space was at a premium due to the power outage. John knew the Meat managers at the local grocery stores, and asked Randy if it was OK to call them and see if they had any ideas.

Randy immediately agreed, since he needed his cattle slaughtered soon, because every day he had to feed them after they reached market weight cost him money, and lost profit.

John hung up, got out his personal phone book, and started making calls. Not only could the meat managers handle that quantity of meat, they'd arrange for the butchering and slaughtering. They thought they would put a notice on the radio that they would have fresh meat available on a certain day, and take a refrigerated delivery truck to a street corner, and the driver/vendor would be wearing a mask and gloves so he could sell the meat right off the truck. That happened often enough in Elko so no one thought it was unusual to see someone selling meat off a truck. John called Randy back with the good news, and the phone number he needed to call to make arrangements. Randy offered him some of the meat for helping him, but John declined saying he had a freezer full. But if he could give him 8 large ranch-cut ribeye steaks, he'd call it even. Randy said he'd make the arrangements, and deliver it personally.

John said he'd rather come over there, since the entire ranch was quarantined to keep them safe from the virus. He could drive over in his pickup, and if Randy could put the package in the bed for him he'd appreciate it! Randy agreed, saying it's always good to be careful! He'd ask the butcher to freeze the ribeyes in their packages to make sure that there were no viruses on them. John thanked Randy, and asked him to call when the meat was ready for pickup, then told him if they needed anything to make sure to call - especially if they were having problems with looters or refugees! They should work together for the defense of their families and property. Randy thought that was a good idea, and said he'd call if he needed anything, then said goodbye and hung up!

John checked in on the kids, and they were busy doing their homework, Sarah and Jean were busy doing stuff, so he went to look for his brother Bill. He found him in the basement inventorying their stuff. He had just finished the food, and was starting on the weapons. John noticed a large locking Pelican case in the corner that Bill wasn't checking. He picked it up, and was surprised at the weight. He asked Bill what was in there - a ton of bricks! Bill gave him a funny look, asked him to set it down on the table. "I didn't want to alarm you, but I brought some toys with me too! I got this off a friend of mine in a trade, there are no papers on it, and I know it isn't stolen, but it was illegal as heck in California!

"OK, now that you've got me interested, let's open it up!"

"Keep your voice down, Jean doesn't know I have this, and would probably throw as big of a fit as Sarah would have about your "Mad Scientist's Laboratory"!"

Randy opened the case, and inside was a brand-new Full Auto Russian AK-47 with 4 75 round drums, 10 30-rd magazines and the original bayonet, cleaning kit, and everything.

John's eyes got as big as saucers "What the Heck are you doing with that! If you were caught with that in the People's Republic of California, you'd be looking at 10-20!"

"Like I said, I got it in trade from a good friend, there's no paper trail to connect me to this rifle, and I thought I might need this living in the PRC if there ever was a LA riot type incident in Northern California!"

“I assume you thought it was worth the risk?”

“Look who’s talking, if the ATF found out about your little set-up you’d be sitting right next to me at Leavenworth!” They both got a good laugh at that! Bill quickly closed and locked the case, then hid it under a pile of other weapons. John was actually glad Bill had the FA AK-47 just in case they had to face a human wave assault. 4 75-round drums out of the AK would stop anything short of an Army! They finished inventorying the firearms and ammo, and John was impressed by all the ammo Bill was able to bring with him. It was almost what John had stored! Between the 2 of them, they had over 20,000 rounds of 5.56 NATO including 1,000 rounds of 55 gr. JHP hunting ammo, and 1,000 rounds of SS-109 penetrator rounds, 10,000 rounds of 7.62x39 ammo, 5,000 rounds of .308 Lake City Match ammo, at least 20,000 rounds of various .22 ammo, and 5,000 rounds of .45 JHP ammo for the Para Ord P-14’s.

Chapter 14

Dateline Carson City Nevada 04/21/2008

Governor Russell was in a meeting with his staff. They were planning how to rebuild the infrastructure of Nevada. The first order of business was to make a list of what needed fixing, what manpower they needed to fix it, and what kind of support they would need to perform their jobs safely. The head of the Occupational Safety department of NV was at the meeting, since he had critical information about how to protect critical workers from the virus.

“Gentlemen, the Military, including the National Guard has adequate stocks of protective equipment for extended deployment in an NBC environment. They are available for manpower, and some of the National Guard people are also the same people who work in these industries on a regular basis, so we get 2 for 1, so to speak. The Hospitals have a limited stock of N -100 filter masks, Tyvek coveralls, rubber gloves and boots. I checked, and there is a local distributor in NV that has 10,000 units in stock, and I placed an order for his entire inventory. This gives us in excess of 10,000 N -100, and 20,000 less effective N -95 filter masks for low-risk areas, as well as over 100,000 of the Tyvek overalls, that aren’t as effective as the MOPP gear the military has access to, but we aren’t going into a “hot zone” and the only real risk is person to person transmission of the virus. They have a huge quantity of gloves and overboots that I ordered as well. The CDC people and other federal agencies have SCBA and Rachal suits in case we locate a “hot zone” that needs decontamination. We can adequately protect a small workforce for an indefinite period, or a much larger workforce for a much shorter period. I’d suggest starting with a much larger force to get stuff up and running as quickly as possible, then scaling back to essential operators and maintenance people as soon as possible. Getting the hospitals decontaminated is not going to happen in the next 6 months, as all surfaces inside the hospital are now considered contaminated until they can be decontaminated. This will take a huge steam autoclave, set outside the building in a secure area, with limited access to only workers protected by Rachal Suits, SCBA, or MOPP 4 gear. I’m leery of letting NG people inside a hot zone in MOPP 4, but if the Governor orders it, I will concur. It will however, probably result in NG casualties due to contamination. Either way, we will need a huge decontamination facility to decontaminate workers before shift change.”

Governor Russell’s Chief of Staff spoke next.

“Thanks for that report, Jim. Governor, we need about 10,000 people statewide to get electricity, gas, water, sewage and phone services up and running again. It will take them about 30 days to complete the work, then the force can be reduced to about 3-4 thousand workers who maintain and operate the equipment. This would deplete the entire stock of emergency gear we have on hand. We need to ask President Schwarzenegger if he can release some gear in Military and Federal Storage so we can have adequate protection.”

“OK, Bob, I’ll make the call right now!” His aide placed a call to the White house, at his National Security Adviser’s personal number.

“Hello!”

“Hello, Ron, this is Governor Russell in Nevada, I have a favor to ask you!”

“Ok, let me get a pad and paper to write this down.”

“OK, we need 50-100 thousand N –100 or N –95 filter masks, Tyvek Coveralls, boots and gloves. I understand you might come up short if everyone requests stuff, but we just need our fair share. If you can release the stocks, we can pretty much take care of ourselves, with some NG units.”

“Governor, I’ll see what I can do! I’ll pass your request to President Schwarzenegger, and I’ll give you a reply before I go home today!”

“Great, Thanks, I appreciate it! Talk to you later.”

When they broke the connection, Governor Russell was smiling.

“Gentlemen, I think I can see a way out of this. Let’s put a notice on all the radio stations that are still broadcasting, and get hold of any county officials we can in the rural counties. Make a list of the people we need to get in touch with at the private utility companies. Finally, make a list of the COs of all the NG units in Nevada we can use for manpower. I want to talk to their COs personally. That’s all for now unless anyone has any further business!”

“Governor Russell, what are you going to do about the Militias and other organizations that are violating the law?”

“George - How are they violating the law?”

“They’re rounding up looters, and shooting murderers and rapists. There have even been some hangings! And the Guns! Everyone is Openly armed and telling State Agents to Bug Off!”

“OK, George, I’m only going to say this once - so pay attention! Militias are operating under my express order! I gave them the authority to do what they are doing! If you have a problem with that, I want your resignation on my desk within the hour!”

George, who was elected Attorney General as a bone to be thrown to the opposition, clammed up fast - he new the Governor wasn’t kidding! If he wanted to stay on the Gravy Train, he had better remember not to Piss Off the Engineer!

With that, the meeting ended. Governor Wilson’s Chief of Staff waited until the room cleared and the doors were closed. “Governor, You really should have fired that SOB!”

“I know, but this emergency isn’t going to last forever, and I’ll just have to hire another scumbag Lawyer to replace him! He’ll behave now that he’s thoroughly broken in!”

“Governor, I like the way you think!”

Dateline Washington DC later that day

Evidently, Governor Russell’s request wasn’t the only one they got for support and equipment.

President Schwarzenegger had a pile of faxes from all the 50 State Governors on his desk. Luckily for the State of Nevada, most had not thought of Protective gear, and wanted stuff like Fire Trucks, generators, etc. President Schwarzenegger met with his National Security Advisor, who had a breakdown of available stocks of emergency supplies. When they got to Nevada's request, Arnold asked Ronnie, "Is that all they want?"

"Mr. President, I talked to Governor Russell, and he told me that if they could get the infrastructure up and running again, that should be all the support they need. Utah echoed their sentiment. Evidently, they were better prepared than the rest of the nation for a disaster!"

"Great, give them whatever they need, It's one less headache I have to deal with today!"

That afternoon, faxes arrived on the Governor's desks in Nevada and Utah approving their requests. Governor Russell gave his Chief of Staff a high-five, and then got back to making calls. The next day, the stocks were shipped to Utah and Nevada.

Chapter 15

Dateline Elko, NV 04/22/2008

The next morning, Sarah got up, and started breakfast. Looking out the kitchen window, she spotted what appeared to be a woman with several little children walking up the road. She yelled for John, who grabbed his binoculars and confirmed that they are a woman and 4 kids ranging in age from 8 to an infant she was carrying in her arms. None of them were visibly armed, so John woke Jennifer, and asked her to man the OP in her bedroom window. She broke out her spotting scope and set it up while Lisa got the Mini-14 out of the closet even though it is almost out of range at 400 yards. They set up next to each other, and Jennifer located them first, then dialed the power up on her spotting scope to bring them in closer so she could get a good look at them. Lisa was looking through the scope of the Mini-14 until Jennifer told her it would be better to use the binoculars, since pointing a rifle at someone is rude, and violates basic Gun Safety rules. Lisa set the rifle back down on its bipod, and grabbed her binoculars to help Jennifer keep watch as they walked up to the driveway. They carefully skirted around the tank ditch and avoided the punji pits, which were designed to stop someone flanking the tank ditch in a military formation. They continued up the driveway, saw the sign on the faucet and stopped in their tracks. Wisely the mother gathered her children around the faucet, and first made sure they all had all the water they could drink, while she nursed her infant in the open. Then she had them take off their filthy clothes, and they took a bath one at a time using a gallon water bottle like a shower, then they washed their clothes. When they were finished, the mother decided she'd rather be clean than modest, stripped and took a quick bath. Jennifer was amazed at what she saw, and Sarah's heart broke!

"John we absolutely HAVE to help that poor woman!"

"Sarah, we can't! You know the rules - no one within 50 feet! I know you want to help, but if they are infected, you could kill us all. Besides, if word got out you were a soft touch, we would be deluged with starving refugees we can't feed, and we would have to shoot some of the bolder ones!"

"John, I think you're wrong about this one! I know how that woman feels! She has no one to rely on besides herself, and she has 5 kids with her! I'm sure they're tired and out of food. Maybe they are trying to make it to the marshes, there's food and water there!"

"Sarah, there's food all along the roadside if you know where to look, and what to pick!"

"John, please let me help this poor woman! I've got a NBC mask you bought me, as well as a set of Tyvek coveralls, boots and gloves. I can decontaminate between here and there, downwind of the house, with the decontamination kits that come with the gear. It's just a viral pandemic, not something like weaponized Anthrax or something that survives for a long period outside a host!"

"Ok, Sarah - against my better judgment, I'll allow you whatever you can carry in one trip! Please don't touch any of them, or get close enough for them to cough or sneeze on you. If you want to talk, I'll get you the loud-hailer I have stored in the basement."

Sarah gave John a big hug, and quickly packed a box full of canned food, stuff for the baby, and some citrus fruit since she didn't know what condition they were in. She threw in a half-dozen sporks they had liberated from the local fast food place, a P-38 can opener, a trial pack of wet-naps, a small hotel bar of soap, and several plastic grocery bags to carry all of it. Thinking quickly, she thought that a couple of gallon Ziplocs would come in handy, and they could use them to carry water. She added a small 35mm film can fishing kit, in case they were going to the marsh, and didn't have anything to fish with! When she was finished, she said a quick prayer to ask protection, set the box on the doorstep as John handed her the Loud-hailer so they could hear her, and gave her a big hug and an admonishment to be careful. John closed the door, and Sarah donned her protective gear. Good thing it was cool outside, since this gear was hot! She waddled more than she walked the distance to the faucet, set the box down at her feet then backed up 10 feet as the woman walked up to the box. Sarah turned on the Loud-hailer with the volume at minimum.

"I saw you from my kitchen window, and I just had to help. We can't spare much, but I hope this is enough!"

The lady stood dumbfounded, then remembered her manners, and started to walk closer to shake Sarah's hand! "Please stay away! I can't risk it even with the gear I'm wearing, I have a family to care for too, just go ahead and yell if necessary so I can hear you!"

The lady stopped in her tracks, then raised her voice to a level that she was sure Sarah could hear! "I don't know who you are, but THANKS doesn't cover half of it! My name is Theresa Brown, and these are my children. My husband is stranded out on the road somewhere, he's a long-haul trucker, and I haven't heard from him since the virus started, I don't know if he's even alive anymore! We ran out of food, and not one of my neighbors would help! Most wouldn't even open the door, and several threatened to shoot me! We were living from paycheck to paycheck, so we had nothing stored when the virus hit and closed the stores. We were hoping to go to the Ruby Marshes over the hills and hopefully stay there for a while. I had the kids drop their packs down the road a bit just in case. Luckily, we have a small dome tent, a small cooking kit, canteens and some lightweight sleeping bags. We have no food, and we ran out of water a mile back, so your offer of water was a Godsend!"

"I packed a box of canned food, something for the baby, some oranges, and stuff. Please come no closer to the house than the faucet, and feel free to stay for another hour and fill up anything you can use to carry water. You are about 5 miles away from Secret Pass just up that way (she pointed across country to the mountains), then another 5 miles from there to the marsh. Just in case you don't have one, I packed a mini fishing kit in the box. It's inside a 35mm film can and has about 50 feet of line and some lead jigs with plastic lures."

"God Bless you Sarah! We didn't have any fishing stuff. I hoped to scrounge some old fishing line and hooks from around the marsh. Some of the lazier fishermen leave their line entangled in the reeds when it gets stuck! If we are careful, I hope the food will last!"

"Do you know how to identify wild plants that you can eat?"

"You mean eat weeds!"

“Exactly, and some are very tasty, and nutritious!” Sarah then told Theresa about some of the local plants, what they looked like, and what parts would be edible right now. Theresa thanked her profusely, and Sarah turned to go. She walked halfway to the house, and took the decontamination packet out of her pocket, opened it, and wiped down her gas mask, gloves, and around her face where the mask didn’t cover. When she finished, she took off the boots, gloves, and coveralls, and left them in a pile inside a bright red trash bag marked “biohazard” She walked 10 feet closer, then carefully removed her gas mask. It felt good to get it off, but she was scared she would contaminate herself. When she got near the house, she unrolled the hose, and drenched herself to the skin with her clothes on as a precaution, then walked around the side, opened the sun porch door, stripped off her wet clothes, changed into dry clothes, and threw the wet clothes into a bucket of bleach water John had left there for that very reason. Now that she was as decontaminated as possible, she entered the house, and John was waiting for her!

“I hope it was worth it!”

“John, you should have seen her, her husband is an OTR driver like your brother Bill was, and they had run out of food. The neighbors didn’t help, and the only thing she could think of within walking distance was the Ruby Marshes. She’s still nursing her infant, and she had her 4 other children up to age 8 with her. She wouldn’t have made it without the help! And to answer your unspoken question, I was never more scared in my life, and I’ll never do that again!”

“Glad you understand - we can’t have any contact with anyone outside our family, no matter how pitiful they may appear! If they have the virus, or are carriers and give it to us, we’re DEAD!”

Sarah gave John a big hug, then checked on things with Jennifer who said “The Mom and her children had went through the box like it was Christmas, and then their Mom had them split an orange between them and put the rest up for later. After she filled several of the gallon Ziplocs with water, she waved, then the left. I hope they make it wherever they’re going!”

“Jennifer, I see you inherited my tender heart. Let’s pray for them so they make it to the marshes.” Mother and daughter held hands and prayed together for a while, then Sarah told Jennifer that they needed to resume their schoolwork, and headed to the kitchen.

Chapter 16

Dateline Nellis AFB, Nevada 04/23/2008

General Tofflemier was at his desk at 0600, reviewing plans, making sure both his planes were 100% combat ready. The last thing he needed was a maintenance screw-up to scrub the mission. He personally hired his chief of the maintenance section, and he was as dedicated to his job as the general was! The General knew he could rely on his maintenance chief to get things done. As he sat there, the B-2's were going through their final pre-mission maintenance checks, and making sure that nothing would damage the RAM coating of the plane. Once it was finished in the maintenance shop, it would be towed to the weapons bays where the bombs would be loaded. The final check was the avionics dept where the mission parameters would be loaded in the ship's 3 computers. This was to make sure the right target was hit, and take as much load off the pilots as possible. One old "stick and rudder" pilot once quipped that flying the B-2 was about as exciting as flying a 747 for Pan Am, until something went wrong! The last thing done was filling the B-2 full of fuel before being towed into the secure hanger.

General Tofflemier received a target update, so far the mullahs hadn't moved from their villas. They hadn't left their houses in years, and they probably wouldn't leave ever again! The final GO Mission codes were also transmitted, with a BOT time of 2400 local. The General looked at the clock, and realized they were going to have to hustle to make the wheels-up time of 1800 local Nevada time. He sent a secure message to his maintenance chief that the B-2 and its tanker had to be wheels up at 1800 this evening. When his maintenance chief got the message, he was glad he pulled an old chief's trick, and added 6 hours to his estimate when he first briefed the general! He was going to need each minute of those extra 6 hours to make sure the planes were good to go!

General Tofflemier met with the pilot and co-pilot for this mission. The B-2 was so heavily computerized that it only required a pilot and co-pilot. Actually the Co-pilot was redundant, but it made the cockpit layout much easier if they had 4 hands available to turn knobs and throw switches. The co-pilot also spelled the pilot on long missions, some of which could run as long as 24 hours. For those missions, the aircrew ate a special low-residue diet for 48 hours prior to the mission. One thing the pilots loved was the new reclining ejection seats that could recline so either the pilot or co-pilot could take a nap while flying. The General told them the nature of the mission, the target, and the other details they needed. Due to the deep black nature of AFSOG group, they didn't have the usual BS briefings - they involved too many people, and the fewer people who knew of their missions, the better. The pilots then reported to their cubicles for mandatory pre-flight rest and other stuff. At wheels-up minus 2 hours, the pilots reported to what looked like a NASA dressing room, except the pilots weren't wearing space suits, but the room was just as clean. When they were suited up, they grabbed their personal gear including their survival kits and some other stuff, and headed to the air-conditioned van to take them to the plane. Wheels-up minus 1 hour they were strapped into their seats, and had started pre-flight checks. They finished them right on schedule, turned on their new discrete radios, and contacted the tanker. It was already in the air due to the slower speed it flew when full of fuel. They'd catch up at the first refueling point due to the difference in speed, then fly in formation until the last refueling point, where the tanker plane would peel off before it was detected by unfriendly

radar. The tanker would then fly to their post-mission rendezvous point for the trip home, staying as far away from the target area as possible. The only thing the tanker crew knew was they were headed to the Middle East. The ungainly B-2 taxied carefully to the runway, making sure they didn't clip anything with their wingtips that almost touched the ground before takeoff. Finally, they received permission to take-off, and the pilot shoved the throttles to full take-off, and the computer set the flaps and all other controls. When they reached VR, the plane practically leapt into the air! As soon as they were 500ft AGL, the co-pilot activated the autopilot, and the pilot removed his hands from the wheel as the plane was capable of flying the entire mission by itself. The black bomber flew into the night, undetected by all radars around it. They took the extra risk of leaving the radar transponder off due to the deep black nature of their organization. They flew through airspace that was so restricted that any unauthorized planes that had strayed into it were forced down and the pilots incarcerated. As they left the Restricted Airspace around Nellis, they contacted Cheyenne Mountain on their radio, turned on their radar transponder, left it on for five seconds, turned it off, and called back. Their radar had made five sweeps over the area where the B-2 was flying, and the only time it showed up was when the transponder was on, so their Stealth Check was satisfactory. If NORAD couldn't see them with the best radars in the world, they were invisible. Next, the copilot tapped a few keys on his console, and the MFD showed exactly where the Stealth Tanker was. There SOP was to do a first refuel within range of Nellis, so if they couldn't refuel, they could RTB to Nellis. An hour or two later, they caught up with the tanker, and flew into formation to tank. Before they approached too closely, the co-pilot disconnected the autopilot so the pilot could fly the refueling in case they need to make an emergency breakaway. Once the pilot had positive control of the aircraft, he flew into the refueling position. The crew of the tanker took it from there, flying the refueling boom right into the B-2's receptacle, and they went ahead and took a full load of fuel. When their gauges said full, the pilot performed a breakaway as the nozzle trailed some fuel vapor. The B-2 pilot slowed slightly to fly formation about a mile behind the tanker, and re-engaged the autopilot. With all their pre-mission checks performed, they settled in for the long flight to the Middle East. With their discrete radios, their planes kept in constant communication, and all the pilots had to do was monitor the plane's systems, and be prepared to take over if a malfunction occurred. This new radio allowed the computers to talk to each other, and fly perfect formation. After about an hour of flight, the co-pilot broke out a deck of cards to pass the time. They played various card games between refueling linkups. They arrived over the Middle East right on schedule, and performed their last pre-mission refueling. When their gauges said full, the pilot of the B-2 performed a break-away, and continued onto his new course, then re-engaged the autopilot. When they were Feet Dry, the co-pilot enabled the weapons system, which got all its information from the flight computers, and downloaded the precision GPS coordinates into the JDAMS weapons. When that was completed, the status lights on the Weapons display went from Red to Green, and the auto-enable light lit, meaning the weapons system had control of the plane, and would fly the plane to the pre-determined drop points for each weapon. While the computers were working, the pilot and co-pilot confirmed the drop and target coordinates manually to make sure they were hitting the right targets. The B-2's rarely had any problems dropping bombs, but they made sure! As they crossed the Saudi Border, the autopilot ordered an altitude change to de-conflict with nearby commercial tracks, and known military flight routes. When they reached their point to start their bombing run, the plane dropped to 20,000 ft. the preferred altitude to drop the JDAM for maximum accuracy. Since they were bombing right in the middle of a village, they wanted to make sure the bomb hit the right target, so they sacrificed altitude for accuracy. The Weapons sys-

tem was all green, with a precision GPS fix of the plane's position every second; they were locked and ready to drop. The pilot pressed the "weapons commit" button, the last fail-safe in the system. At this point, as soon as the plane reached the IP, the bomb bay would open automatically, and the JDAM would be ejected to hit its target. The first IP was fast approaching, and the radio was silent, so they knew they were go mission. Seconds later, the bomb bay opened, the JDAM was ejected, and they got a brief tone on the radar warning system when the bomb bays opened. Since the bay was only open for a second, they knew even an experienced operator wouldn't know what it was until they either heard the explosion, or were notified of it.

Down below, the Mullah and his family were asleep in their beds as Death inexorably dove down to greet them. A few seconds later, all that was left of the villa was a huge fireball, and some small rubble. 1 down 10 to go!

As the B-2 flew on, the pilots were unaware of the havoc they had unleashed below them and continued on their mission. In short order, the rest of the bombs were released, and 10 more Mullahs got a surprise audience with the Creator! The B-2's mission completed, they rendezvoused with the tanker over the Indian Ocean, and returned to Dreamland.

Dateline Washington DC, several hours later

"President Schwarzenegger, we just got these images from the NSA. All 10 targets were struck and terminated. The planes are RTB and everything is green!"

"Ronnie, Speak English!"

"Yes Mr. President! Anyway, we got confirmation from the KH-12 satellite that all 10 targets were hit and destroyed!"

"Any collateral damage?"

"Minimal - in a crowded village, a 1000 pound bomb throws a lot of fragments! We didn't have the 500 pound JDAMS working yet, so we had to go with the bigger bomb!"

"OK, as long as we didn't take out a hospital or mosque!"

"No, Mr. President, just some nearby houses. Good news was they were probably relatives of the Mullahs we were targeting."

"Very well, let me know what the Saudi response to the bombing, and keep the second B-2 on alert until we hear the Saudi response!"

"Yes, Mr. President!"

"Ronnie, My Name is Arnold - please call me by my first name when we're alone!"

"Yes, Mr. President...excuse me, Arnold!" Ronnie walked back to his office, muttering under his breath. Arnold went back to his notes for the upcoming votes on Capitol Hill.

Chapter 17

Dateline Washington DC, Later that Day

The President's intercom buzzed. "Yes, what is it?"

"Mr. President, the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia is requesting a face to face meeting as soon as possible."

"Very well, what's my schedule look like?"

"We can bump that photo op in two hours."

"Very well, schedule it for then. I need the Director of the CIA and my National Security Advisor there as well, oh and Betty, please tell the Ambassador to be here half an hour early, and revoke his pass so he has to go through security. Make sure you tell him the meeting time is ½ hour earlier than it is, I want this SOB to have to cool his heels and wait!"

"Yes Mr. President, Anything Else?"

"That is all, thanks."

Arnold was looking forward to this showdown with the Saudi ambassador, Time to take those duplicitous SOB's down a notch or two! He called his National Security Advisor and the head of the CIA to give them a heads-up, then went back to his speech.

Two hours later, Ronnie and the Director of the CIA came in the secure door, while the Ambassador had to walk around to the visitor's entry and submit to the full security procedure, including being searched! To say he was fuming when he got to the reception area was an understatement. Then the secretary told him to wait. She had an idea of what was going to happen, and approved! He cooled his heels for a full 20 minutes before being escorted in to the Oval Office by a Secret Service Agent. He was wearing a red tabbed Foreign Visitor badge that required he was escorted anywhere in the White House, instead of his diplomatic badge that allowed much more civilized access. As he entered the Oval Office, Arnold not only was seated, but had his feet up on his desk, pointing at the door! This was an extreme insult to the Arabic Ambassador, but the fireworks were just starting!

The Ambassador opened with both barrels, standing and shouting at the President. "Mr. President, I must really protest this uncivilized treatment, and the bombing of our country by the United States!"

"SIT DOWN! How dare you come in here and accuse the US of blowing up 10 lousy mullahs when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an accomplice to the murder of over 80 Million US Citizens! Sit Down I say!"

Finally the Saudi Ambassador sat down, he didn't want the Secret Service to come in here and remove him!"

“Mr. President, we did a chemical and material analysis of the bomb fragments, and they match the US JDAM bomb. Why did the US bomb the kingdom of Saudi Arabia?”

“Took you long enough to figure it out! Before we go on, I want you to see something. We have incontrovertible proof that the Royal Family contributed billions of dollars over the last 20 years to the same mullahs that instigated, funded, and ordered the viral attack on the United States that resulted in the deaths of 80 Million US citizens, including 50 million women and children! Ronnie, if you please!”

As the lights darkened, images of bank records flashed on the screen, as the Director of the CIA and the National Security Advisor Tag-teamed the Saudi Ambassador with overwhelming evidence of over 10 billion dollars transferred from supposedly secret accounts of the Saudi Royal Family directly into supposedly secret accounts of the 10 mullahs who were killed, as well as the head of the Iranian Secret Service’s supposedly secret account in Switzerland. The King’s electronic signature and password appeared on each document! The Ambassador grew pale, he didn’t know about this judging by his reaction. After the briefing was over, Arnold took Center Stage as the lights came back on!

“Mr. Ambassador, what you have seen is the result of an ongoing investigation by the CIA and others into protection payments and donations by the Saudi Royal Family directly into the accounts of these Radical Watabe Mullahs. What disturbs me is the payment to the head of the Iranian Secret Police in the amount of \$10 million. We know he is deeply involved in their Bio-war program! The Kingdom as a choice to make right now, and I’m only giving you 8 hours to notify us before Riyadh ceases to exist. If word of this conversation gets out, if the Royal Family is moved, or we don’t hear what we want to hear within 8 hours, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will cease to exist! You may leave now, I recommend you move fast, because the clock is ticking!”

Forgetting his manners, the Saudi Ambassador bolted from the room, and walked as fast as he could to his limo, and broke several speed laws getting to his Embassy. The NSA monitored the conversation between the Ambassador and the King. President Schwarzenegger was provided with a transcript minutes later.

Ronnie and the CIA director were both still in the Oval Office when the secure fax beeped with the intercept and translated transcript.

“Well I’ll be damned! The ambassador convinced the King that we were serious. I wonder what the king will offer to compensate us for the damage!”

Mr. President, even with the compensation, I’m afraid this can never get out! If it did the people would be screaming for us to nuke Saudi Arabia, and we really can’t do that!”

Arnold addressed his CIA Director by his first name as he did with his other Insiders. “Jim, yes we can nuke Saudi, and if this ever got out, I’d be forced to! As it is, we’re going to have to keep a lid on this, that’s why I made the secrecy conditions part of our demands.”

Six hours later the much meeker Saudi Ambassador showed up at the White House. He was ush-

ered into the reception area, and was escorted into the Oval Office. Arnold was much more diplomatic this time, after all he had won! His feet were on the floor, and he rose to greet the Saudi Ambassador, and shook hands in the American tradition. Then he offered the Saudi Ambassador some tea from a special supply they kept on hand for Arabic Major Diplomats. Arnold was making a point that the Ambassador understood easily, "Screw with us, we'll destroy you, but if you act friendly toward us, we will reciprocate!" The Ambassador had never received this treatment from any previous President except Ronald Reagan! He realized the US was negotiating from a position of strength, and respected it!

He accepted the tea graciously, took a sip, then started apologizing for what had happened.

"Mr. President, I spoke to the King, who has assured me he had nothing to do with this horrible attack and has started an immediate investigation into who was responsible. He told me personally that even if the Crown Prince is involved, he will be publicly beheaded! We deeply regret the loss of life, and want to make amends. The King has authorized payments to the US treasury of \$1 million per fatality, and an additional \$100 billion credit to cover clean up costs. Since we can't possibly cover that much in cash, would you accept a trade for crude oil at today's market price - delivered of course for no charge!"

Ronnie slipped Arnold a note with the number \$200 Billion on it! The president nearly choked - he hadn't seen figures that big since he'd seen the figures on the National Debt!

The Ambassador continued, "Also, the Kingdom wants to fully pay for their own defense, including buying all their equipment from the United States."

Ronnie chimed in at this point, "Mr. Ambassador, what assurance do we have you won't use this weaponry to attack Israel?"

The Ambassador sat down and thought about that for a minute. If they signed a peace treaty, the rest of the Arab world would destroy them. He was in a tough spot!

"Mr. President, I have a solution! If the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attacks Israel, you can use your B-2 bombers to destroy the Kingdom! We understand we exist at your good will and forbearance. It would NOT be in our best interest to make that mistake again!"

"Mr. Ambassador, I'm glad you understand that, We can either be good friends, or Deadly Enemies! I prefer we be friends! You understand that no word of this can leak out, If the Citizens of the US were made aware of Saudi involvement in this attack, I would be forced to destroy the Kingdom. I do not want to do that, but I will if I have to! We have a saying in America, "The Ball's In Your Court!" Take full advantage of this opportunity to make amends, and we will be in touch."

"Thank You, Mr. President. I will relay our conversation to the King!" With that, the Saudi Ambassador reached for Arnold's hand, and Arnold shook hands with the Ambassador, who was given his security pass back, and escorted back out the VIP entrance.

As soon as the Ambassador left, Arnold sat down drained. Ronnie congratulated him. "Arnold,

that was perfect, I couldn't have done better myself - too bad they don't give out an Academy Award for scaring the Crap out of a Foreign Ambassador!"

Arnold turned red faced to Ronnie, "Do You think that was an ACT! My God, I was ready right up to the end to Nuke Saudi Arabia and take my lumps from the press! I was deadly serious and the Ambassador knew it!"

"I'm sorry Mr. President! I didn't realize that!"

"Ronnie, make sure you issue the Stand Down order to General Tofflemier. They can take the weapons out of the Second B-2, it won't be needed! Thank the General for me for a Job Well Done - Send him Bravo Zulu from me!"

"Yes Mr. President!"

Chapter 18

Dateline Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada 04/24/2008

General Tofflemier received a secure fax from the President's National Security Advisor ordering him to stand down the second B-2. General Tofflemier was relieved, but disappointed. He called his maintenance chief and asked him to personally supervise the disarming and unloading of the Mark 82s in the second B-2's bomb bay. General Tofflemier decided to leave the bird fueled for now, just in case. That way it could be quickly reloaded with either conventional or nuclear weapons if anything happened. When the first B-2 landed, the general was going to personally debrief the pilot and copilot, and relay the President's Bravo Zulu. It's not every day a unit gets a personal commendation by the President!

Dateline Elko Nevada

Sarah made breakfast for the clan, then John suggested they all go to their range for some shooting practice. Years ago, John had bulldozed a 100 yard 5 station shooting range. He didn't have enough room for a 400 yard range, so they used reduced size targets to simulate the distance. It wasn't quite the same, since the wind's effect on the bullet's path was different shooting at reduced targets at 100 yards vs. shooting at full size targets at 400 yards. The wind had a few fractions of a second longer to act on the bullet at 400 yards. Luckily there was a 400 yard range nearby, but John didn't want to leave the ranch right now.

John set up 4 lanes of 100 yard targets first, then 1 lane of reactive steel targets to practice their pistol shooting. John insisted that everyone be as good with a Para Ordinance P-14 as their chosen rifle. He set up various drills and scenarios as they shot them, so they wouldn't get bored. John used a timer and kept score on time vs. hits. Pistol matches around the Mathews house were always decided by time, because they were so good they didn't miss! Even Jennifer could out-shoot most of the guys at their gun club in pistol, and was about ready to move up to the Adult division in their rifle competition, since she routinely placed 1st or 2nd in the Junior division. At the end of the day, Alex placed 1st by out shooting his Dad on the rifle range, and tying him on the pistol range. John came in second, then Bill, Jennifer, Sarah, JR, Jean, and Lisa. Lisa was handicapped by her age, and the fact she spent her weekends at the mall, instead of the shooting range like Jennifer did. When they were finished, John decided to challenge Alex to a shoot off on the El Presidente Drill for \$20.00. Since they rarely missed at this scenario, it would come down to raw speed, and the family anxiously gathered around to witness a speed demonstration. Sarah was elected to run the timer to give no shooter an advantage. Everyone put their Wolff tactical headsets and their shooting glasses back on. Alex flipped a coin to settle who would shoot first, and John won the toss and elected to go first, figuring if he smoked the round, that Alex would buckle under the pressure. John walked up to the shooting line, checked his gun, holstered it, did a few experimental draws, got it set just the way he wanted it, then turned his back to the targets, and raised his hands into the "surrender" position signaling he was ready. Since both Alex and John were right handed, Sarah stood on their right side, since they did a "Classic" El Presidente, and drew with their right hands, spun counter-clockwise and engaged the targets. As soon as they were set, Sarah pressed the button on the timer for a random start tone. As soon as the buzzer went off, John grabbed leather while turning to face the targets.

Using a Classic Weaver stance, he engaged the left target first, and the right and center targets in order, then fired a second round into each. When he finished, John safed his weapon and holstered it. Sarah was walking over to examine the targets. All the bullet marks were in the center of the A zone, right where they belonged. Sarah checked the timer. 2.5 seconds from the start tone to the last round! Jennifer High-fived her Dad then sat down. Alex walked up to the line, checked his weapon, and instead of taking a few test draws, turned his back to the targets and raised his hands. As soon as she was ready, Sarah pushed the button for the random start tone. Alex was a blur as he turned and fired as soon as the beeper went off. He was pushing it, he didn't even bother going to a Weaver stance! He shot the entire sequence one-handed. When he finished, Sarah checked the timer, and Alex shot it in 2.4 seconds! She checked the targets, and all the rounds were in the A zone where they belonged! John knew Alex beat him fair and square, but wondered if he was getting older, or if Alex was getting better! Last year, he had challenged Alex to an El Presidente shootoff, and beat him by almost a full second! John handed Alex the \$20 bill, and gave him a big hug. If he had to be beat, he was glad it was his son instead of Bill! They had been competitive all their lives, and John always beat Bill. Bill walked over and kidded John.

“Getting old John! I remember when you could shoot a El Presidente in 2.4 seconds!”

“Yeah - just rub it in little brother! I still whipped your butt!”

“That's because I don't go out and shoot every weekend. I'd have to drive 100 miles to get to a legal 100 yd range!”

“You know the solution to that problem - MOVE!”

“Like I told you before, I'm still kicking myself for not buying the ranch next to you when it came on the market.”

“Win a few, loose a few - and sometimes you get rained out.”

“Real funny Brother!”

When they had put up all the targets, they went back into the house to eat lunch.

Dateline Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

King Faud was NOT in a good mood! He yelled at the servants, then demanded his son, the crown prince be brought before him immediately. When his son appeared, he ordered everyone else out of the room. As his son stood before him, he demanded that his son explain himself.

“What have you done! I just had to placate that infidel muscle bound freak to keep him from dropping a nuclear bomb on the palace! Now I find out from our Ambassador that someone in the Royal Family has been paying protection money to the Watabe Mullahs - \$10 Billion dollars over the last 20 years! Then he tells me that someone paid the head of the Iranian Secret Police \$10 Million dollars - the Infidels claim that we paid him to buy some weaponized Ebola Virus, except we were too stupid to buy the antidote as well! What do you have to say for yourself!”

“Father,. I was acting under the orders of the Ruling Council. They wanted to placate the Mullahs, and they felt the best way was to buy them off. I disagreed, of course. I know of the transfer to the Iranian Secret Police, but I swear to Allah it wasn't to buy a bioweapon!”

“I'm going to investigate this personally, and if you're lying, I'll have you beheaded in the central square at high noon! Now get out of my sight!” The Crown Prince practically tripped over himself in his haste to get away. When his back was turned, he thought to himself “I've got to get rid of the old geezer before he makes me the scapegoat.” As he walked outside, he got the attention of his aide, whispered a word into his ear, and kept walking.

Chapter 19

Dateline Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

As soon as the Crown Prince left, King Faud ordered his driver to prepare his limousine - He was going to visit the Ruling Council and get to the bottom of this. As he was leaving, the Crown Prince's Aide noted the King was leaving and made a quick call on his Cellular phone.

When the King arrived at the Ruling Council, he strode into the building and functionaries bowed and scraped as he passed. He threw open the doors of the Ruling Council and shouted a question, "Who authorized you to pay off the Watabe Mullahs?" A wizened old man wearing traditional Arab garb walked toward the King. King Faud immediately recognized the head of the Ruling Council, an old friend for decades. "Greetings Mohammed al Saud, I hope you're not the person behind this fiasco?"

"My King, as you reign in Majesty, I would never be so presumptuous to make a decision like that without consulting you!"

"VERY WELL, WHO DID?"

"Your Highness, can we go into this antechamber and discuss this privately?"

"Yes, of course - it would be better if we discuss this in private." The King followed the head of the council into a lavishly decorated and very secure room off the council chambers. When the doors were closed and secured Mohammed spoke. "Your Highness, I have some very disturbing news! It has come to my attention that the Crown Prince has activated an assassination attempt against you! He was the one behind the Mullahs and the Terrorists! He was using them to destabilize the Kingdom and depose you. Since you so artfully dodged that trap, he has put in motion a plan to assassinate you and take the throne himself. As we speak, he is marshaling his forces, and will attack your limousine between here and the Palace."

"How do you know this?"

"My Lord, I've had the Kingdom's security forces following him and bugging his phones and his aide's phones since he started paying off the mullahs. When you left the palace, his aide placed a call to a Colonel in the Royal Saudi Guard who is loyal to the Crown Prince, and the Colonel then called the rest of the conspirators, then activated his Guard Unit without permission. He is now en route to where they were going to spring the ambush. I've arranged for a double to take your place, and let them spring their ambush. Once they claim you are dead, and call for the coronation of the Crown Prince, you will emerge from hiding and demand the execution of the traitors. I have a list here in my throbe of all the known traitors, and the ambush and the call to make the Crown Prince the King will smoke out the rest!"

"Mohammed, I owe you my life! Without you, I'd be dead now!"

"Your Highness, It is my duty to serve you!"

“You will be rewarded for your loyalty!”

“Your Highness, you must remain in this room until I call for you! I have the only key to the door, it’s an electronic lock, but you can open it from the inside, so you aren’t a prisoner!”

With the word “prisoner”, the King’s face grew flush - what if this was a double-cross, and Mohammed was in on it! He had to trust someone! But who? The King decided to trust Mohammed, because if he didn’t he was dead anyway! He nodded to Mohammed, who took a cellular phone out of his throbe, and made a quick call. 2 minutes later, there was a knock on the door, and the double was standing there looking at the King! He looked like the King’s long dead brother, and he knew it would fool anyone that didn’t get too close a look! The King blessed the man, knowing he was probably going to die in his place, then he left and got into the limousine while the King stayed in the room with Mohammed. About half an hour later, the King heard a loud explosion, and knew that the ambush had been sprung. Half an hour later, Mohammed got a call on his cell phone. “Your Highness, The Crown Prince has tipped his hand, and broadcast word you were dead, and that he would reluctantly assume the title!”

“That Cursed Dog of a Traitor - I rue the day he was born - may he rot in Hell! He has signed his own death warrant! May I borrow your phone?”

The King called his head of Security, and issued arrest warrants for all the traitors on the list, and told the head of Security to shoot anyone who resists, but to try and capture the Crown Prince alive so the King could witness his execution.

Half an hour later, Security forces armed with H&K MP-5s burst into the palace, and a firefight ensued, but the security forces had superior numbers and firepower, and quickly suppressed any resistance. Finally, they entered the Throne Room where the Crown Prince sat with his ill-gotten crown. The head of Security approached the Crown Prince, “You are under arrest by orders of King Saud!”

“Preposterous, the King is dead!”

The Head of Security pulled out his cellular phone, hit redial and handed the phone to the Crown Prince. The King was on the Line!

“So you couldn’t wait until I died a natural death, and sought to hasten it! Not only that, but you conspired with dogs and infidels to bring down the Kingdom! For this, you will be beheaded in the Central Square at Noon tomorrow!”

“NO, It can’t be!” screamed the Crown Prince in a girlish voice. “He’s DEAD - the Colonel blew up his limo with him in it!”

The head of Security couldn’t resist and told the Crown Prince “No he wasn’t - Mohammed al Saud was on to you! We’ve been watching and waiting for you to try something! Now that you’ve signed your own death warrant, you are coming with us!” With that, the head of security clasped handcuffs on the Crown Prince and lead him away to the Security detention facility. There would be no trial, and the executioner was already sharpening his scimitar as the Crown

Prince exited the security van. The sight of the huge shiny razor sharp blade made the Crown Prince faint where he stood. The security guards dragged him into a cell, and posted a heavy guard. Soon most of the detention facility filled with conspirators. King Saud waited while that palace was cleaned, then took another limousine to the palace, accompanied by a heavy guard of loyal Royal Saudi Guard troops. Once firmly ensconced in the palace, the King signed the execution orders for all the traitors. Mohammed al Saud met the King later that day, and spoke to him. He explained what had happened and why. The King was shocked and stunned that the conspiracy was so wide reaching. The next morning, a long line of prisoners made their way to the Central Plaza, chained together like common criminals. At the head of the line was the Crown Prince. His robes were torn and dirty, and he obviously hadn't bathed since his arrest. They shuffled along slowly as the procession wound from the security detention facility to the square. It was over a mile between the cells and the square, and the temperature in the sun was over 100 degrees, adding to the misery of the prisoners. As they reached the square, a Mullah met the line and asked them to repent and meet Allah with a clean conscience. The Crown Prince spat in his face, earning a slap to the face from the guard. The next person in line was a little more talkative, and spilled his guts about the conspiracy and his role, and begged forgiveness. The Mullah went on down the line, and finally when they were through, the line marched forward into the square. In the center of the square was a huge man wielding a 6 foot ceremonial scimitar with a foot wide blade. The sight of the executioner made the Crown Prince stumble and lose all control of his nerves. He started babbling incoherently, and was unhooked from the head of the line, and bodily carried by 2 guards to the chopping block. As he was strapped in place, the executioner raised his scimitar for the death blow. As the blade fell, the crowd roared "ALLAH AKBAR!" and the Crown Prince's head rolled away from his body as the neck fountained blood. The eyes still focused for several minutes until the brain died from lack of oxygen. The process was repeated 50 times for the rest of the conspirators, then the King got up and shut off the TV that was carrying the live feed.

"I wish I didn't have to do that, he was my favorite son!" said the King as he sat back down.

Chapter 20

Dateline Washington, DC 04/25/2008

President Schwarzenegger was in an early morning meeting with his cabinet, when an aide strode into the Oval Office and handed the National Security Advisor a copy of a fax from the CIA. “Mr. President, I have excellent news, King Faud just had the Crown Prince beheaded in the Central Square of Riyadh! It seems the King was the victim of an attempted Palace Coup, and the Crown Prince was the head of the conspiracy. The head of the Royal Council was the one that brought the charges, and the attack on the King’s limousine clinched it. It hasn’t been announced outside the Kingdom yet, but it seemed the King used the event to clean house, as several high-ranking dissidents were executed as well as “conspirators”. It seems the King is keeping his promise so far.”

“Great, Ronnie - but how about the head of Iranian Security - he was the one that sold them the virus! What are we going to do about him?”

“Mr. President, if you’ll allow me to discuss this at a later time, I might be able to come up with something you’ll like!”

“OK, Ronnie, right after the Cabinet Meeting.”

Dateline Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

King Faud was meeting with Mohammed al Saud. He had to discuss things with someone in the kingdom, and Mohammed had become his most trusted advisor by default after saving his life. “Mohammed, I’m between a Rock and a Hard Place. I promised the President of the United States a huge quantity of money and oil in order to keep him from dropping a nuclear bomb on the palace.”

“My King, why did you promise that Infidel Dog anything?”

“The conspiracy involving the Crown Prince was more involved than you suspected. He was funding the Mullahs, but he also bought a deadly virus from the Head of Iranian Security, and had the Mullah’s terrorists deliver it to the USA. It almost backfired, since they were too ignorant to buy the antidote as well! Millions of Muslims died as well as the infidels when the virus found its way back to the Middle East. That Muscle Bound Infidel Freak found out that the Crown Prince was behind it, and the Mullahs organized and recruited the terrorists. After he bombed the houses of the Mullahs, he called our ambassador onto the carpet and treated him most rudely, threatening to blow up the Kingdom in retaliation. Knowing he was crazy enough to do it, I had no choice but to capitulate. Also he stipulated that this agreement must remain secret, or the American Infidels would insist on destroying the Kingdom! I’m counting on you to see that my wishes are carried out, and this agreement remains a secret. If this were to get out, it would mean the death of the Kingdom, and the destruction of Islam!”

“Your Highness, there must be another way! Could you string them along, and drag the payments out for years? Eventually we would get a more agreeable President in the White House

who we could work with!”

“Thank you, Mohammed, I already thought of that - that’s why I made the bulk of the payment in Oil! We are going to slow the flow of oil to a trickle due to “Mechanical Difficulties” and delay payment for years! Those Infidel Dogs think they can threaten the Kingdom, the Home of Islam? Not as long as I rule!”

Dateline Washington DC

Later that morning after President Schwarzenegger finished the Cabinet meeting, he met in the Situation Room with his National Security Advisor, and the Directors of the CIA and the NSA. Arnold was wondering why the NSA was here, but waited for Ronnie to explain things.

“Arnold, there have been some new developments since this morning. I think the Saudis haven’t changed their duplicitous ways! This morning, NSA intercepted an encrypted Cell Call from Mohammed al Saud, the head of the Royal Council to the Oil Minister. He told him to stop performing certain maintenance functions that would greatly slow their ability to deliver oil. I think they are thinking about deliberately slowing oil production to avoid paying us!”

“Those Duplicitous Raghead SOB’s!!! I knew I couldn’t trust them. George Bush Jr. told me not to trust the Saudis as far as I could throw them, now I know he was right! OK, here’s what I want to do! I need a high-value target in a remote part of Saudi Arabia that will cost that scumbag billions of dollars to replace, with minimal loss of life, and limited repercussions to us. Find that target, get back to me, and I’ll approve it! Use the AFSOG group again - contact General Tofflemier after I approve the mission! I want this target blown up within 24 hours!”

Ronnie grinned from ear to ear, “Yes, Mr. President!” Then he went to his office to use his computer and pick a suitable target.

When Ronnie got to his Office, he sent a secure fax to General Tofflemier, giving him a heads-up for a hurry up mission for the 2nd B-2. Ronnie hoped the B-2 was still ready to go. After he sent the message, Ronnie loaded a CD-Rom disk into his PC, and loaded the map of Saudi Arabia. 15 minutes later he had the perfect target. He printed out the target coordinates, description and an order for the President’s signature authorizing the mission. When he had all his ducks in a row, he carried the paperwork in an Orange tabbed folder, indicating to everyone in the White House that he was on important business, so he was shown right into the Oval Office. When Arnold got a look at the target Ronnie had picked, he practically fell out of his chair laughing! “Prefect - I like your sense of style! Mission approved!” and Arnold took his official signing pen and signed his name where Ronnie pointed out.

Chapter 21

Dateline Nellis AFB, Nevada 04/25/2008

When General Tofflemier received his orders and the target, he too just about fell off his chair laughing!

“Son of a Bitch! Someone in the White house has developed a set of Large Ones! I just love this guy! I wonder what the Saudis did to piss Arnold off so much!” He got on the phone to his maintenance chief.

“Bob, you’re going to love this one! We have Presidential tasking for a RTFN mission for the second B-2. Get her ready to fly as fast as possible with a full load of conventional 1000 pound JDAMS! I’ll transmit the target list and coordinates directly to the avionics office, so they can do a “hurry up” mission plan. I can’t tell you what we’re taking out, but trust me, you’d love this one!”

“General, the bird is still fueled, and I double checked everything this morning. As soon as the pilots get suited up and avionics downloads the data, we’re good to go whenever you want to launch. Sir, this would be a daylight launch, so we need to take that into consideration and route the bird away from military and civilian aircraft routes.”

“Bob, don’t worry, I’ll take care of it! Thanks for reminding me! If you need to tell me anything, I’ll have my cell phone with me until the bird launches.”

As soon as he hung up, the General transferred the targeting list and coordinates to the Avionics Shop to program the Flight computers with a note to avoid military and civilian air routes over the CONUS until after local dark. The pilots were going to love this mission, they normally just flew the mission like taxi drivers, this time they might get to use their precision LANTIRN targeting laser if the weather permitted.

The klaxon went off in the pilot’s quarter, it wasn’t the SCRAMBLE Klaxon, but the one they’d only heard on drills that told them someone upstairs needed something blown up RTFN! They ran to use the head, then to their dressing room, where they suited up, did a complete systems check on their gear, and were driven to the hangar where the second B-2 waited. At the same time, the Stealth Tanker crew was getting a scramble order. They fueled the big jet in record time, and topped off the transfer tanks. As soon as the plane was gassed up and pre-flighted, they received priority orders for Runway 1. They were to receive their mission orders in the air. The pilot thought to himself, “I wonder who has the juice to scramble a tanker like that? I hope the mission is worth the risks we’re taking!” As the pilot turned onto Runway 1, he got clearance to perform a max performance take-off! The pilot acknowledged the order, and shoved the throttles to 100% The jet accelerated rapidly with the huge thrust of 4 monstrous hi-bypass turbofans. It reached VR a little more than halfway down the runway, and as the pilot pulled the yoke back to rotate, he left the engines at 100%. The SOP for max performance take-off required him to keep the engines at 100% until he reached cruising speed and altitude.

Half an hour later, the B-2 crew finished pre-fighting the bird, loaded the DVD disk with the mis-

sion information into the flight computers, then called the tower to tell them they were ready. They too received Priority Clearance for Runway 1, and a military plane escort HUMVEE with its flashing orange lights indicating its priority mission. As they taxied to the runway, the copilot and pilot hustled to get the plane ready to fly. They finished configuring the plane for takeoff just as they reached the end of Runway 1. Another radio call, and the tower cleared them for immediate take-off and issued the codeword BUSTER meaning the pilots were authorized to break all normal peace-time flight restrictions to execute this mission. The pilot acknowledged the BUSTER, and was overriding the autopilot as he turned up Runway 1. He selected full military power, and the huge bomber almost accelerated as fast as a fighter. He reached VR almost a ¼ mile sooner than normal, and pulled the yoke into this lap to rotate. Once he was aloft and wheels up, he reprogrammed the autopilot for the BUSTER setting and radioed the tanker to link up. When the pilot realized that the tanker was now almost an hour ahead of them, he understood the reason for the BUSTER code - it would take max performance to catch a tanker running at full military! Someone upstairs was in a BIG hurry!

Several hours later, the B-2 caught up with the tanker right on the edge of going bingo and performing a mandatory RTB. The pilot didn't have a second to waste, so he performed the link-up manually, and flew right into the 'sweet spot' without the usual station checks. As soon as he was in the groove, he called the tanker and told them he was almost bingo, and to move their butt. The boom operator was already in position, and quickly flew the boom to the B-2 and hooked up, right as the annunciator chimed "bingo". Since they were transferring fuel, the copilot turned off the announcement, and proceeded to refuel. When they were finished fueling, he called the tanker, thanked them for the gas, and performed a standard break. He slowed slightly to keep station with the tanker about a mile back. When he reset the autopilot for the rest of the mission, he took his hands off the yoke to make sure the autopilot was flying the plane, then turned to the co-pilot. "Jimmy can you figure out why someone wants us somewhere so bad they are willing to risk 2 multi-million dollar planes, 4 pilots and a half dozen crew members with a RTFN mission."

Jimmy was in the process of interrogating the flight computer with his keyboard. First he called up the target list.

"John, you're not going to believe this!"

He told the pilot about the target list, and they both agreed that the Saudis must have really pissed someone off!

Digging further into the mission orders, Jimmy started laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"God must really like B-2 Pilots - we drew the "ultimate pilot's mission" It's a high-value target, and best of all- we might get to use the LANTIRN targeting laser!"

"Jimmy, you mean YOU get to use the laser, I have to baby sit the plane."

"Yeah, well at least you get to tell the other pilots you flew a RTFN mission and actually got to

use the laser! No one's been able to use the laser since Desert Storm 1."

Partially mollified, John turned back in his seat to monitor the systems until their next scheduled tanking.

As they flew into the darkness over the Atlantic, the plane turned southward towards Saudi Arabia. They tanked twice before reaching the Middle East. As before, they flew in a commercial corridor, but high enough to avoid a potential mid-air collision with a French Airbus flying out of Cairo or Riyadh. Before reaching Saudi Airspace, they tanked one last time, then the tanker diverted to rendezvous in the Persian Gulf for the trip home. The pilot of the Tanker made the usual radio call as they separated, but added "Godspeed and Good Hunting!"

John replied, "You guys keep Shamu safe for us until we get back, we don't feel like swimming!"

The tanker ignored the good-natured ribbing about their oversized tanker. The pilots called the dark black Stealth Tanker Shamu after the famous black killer whale at Sea World for obvious reasons. As they crossed the Saudi border, the co-pilot enabled the attack computer, checked the weather forecast, then told the pilot the great news. "Looks like we get to use the laser, there's dominant high pressure over the Gulf which means clear and cold- Ideal weather for the laser!"

John told Jim, "OK, get it set up. I want to use a "stealth mode" drop, so we're going to get just one shot with the laser per target. If it doesn't lock up, we'll let the JDAM fly to the target by itself. We've got a bay full of JDAMs in case we miss. I don't want to hang around if we miss, so make that first shot count!"

"John, I won't miss - remember Red Flag two years ago? The previous B-2 crew called NO JOY on their laser LANTIRN guided run, then I found the target through the junk and we bombed it to smithereens!"

"OK, just make sure you get it with the first shot. IP in ten minutes, time to uncage the laser and warm up the system. Flight to attack, Laser priority, GPS backup."

Jim flipped the appropriate switches and configured the attack computer, which would control the autopilot until one of the pilots turned off the attack computer. Once the attack computer was configured, all the lights went green, and the annunciator beeped, indicating the attack computer was going to maneuver the plane. Then the B-2 banked sharply and dove down to 10,000 ft. the optimum height for laser delivery of a JDAM.

As they reached the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, the Attack computer beeped, indicating they had reached the IP for their bombing run. The pilot flipped the weapons switch to ENABLE, the last safety in the system. Meanwhile, the co-pilot was scanning ahead with the infrared laser system, going for a lock-up. All of a sudden, he said "GOT IT, Target 1 identified, Laser LOCKED." and a few seconds later, the bomb bay opened, and a 1000 pound JDAM was ejected into the slipstream. When the JDAM achieved a nose-down attitude and the seeker head achieved lock, the co-pilot got a tone in his headset indicating the JDAM had located the target, and would take it from there. "Target 1, JDAM lock confirmed, switching to Target 2" He targeted the laser on the other target, called out, "Target 2 Identified, Laser LOCKED" and a few

seconds later the second JDAM was on it's way. As soon as he received a tone in his headset, he confirmed "Target 2, JDAM lock, lets get feet wet!"

The pilot disengaged the attack system, and programmed in the coordinates to link up with Shamu. "OK, let's head for home."

Seconds later, the Saudi Royal Yachts Al Yamana and Abdul Aziz lit the evening sky with huge fireballs! The huge explosions damaged nearby port facilities, and as a bonus, sunk a French Supertanker that was in the adjacent berth.

Dateline Washington, DC

Hours later, at first light, Ronnie was waiting for President Schwarzenegger with a look on his face like they just won the Super Bowl and the Lottery all in the same day.

"I take it you have good news for me?"

"This came in overnight, The KH-12 we have orbiting the Middle East picked this up at about 0130 local over King Abdul Aziz Port in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. It shows 2 huge fireballs, and a second later, another one in the adjacent berthing space. The next shot shows nothing in the spots where the targets were, and a whole lot of debris distributed around the nearby port facilities. Judging from these pictures, I can confirm the BDA as 100% with a huge bonus. A French Supertanker was berthed next berth over, and was taken out by the twin explosions of the 2 Royal Yachts. It seems the Saudis will have to buy themselves some new toys!"

"Ronnie, I'm really happy about this, I love it - we nail the French, and the Saudis are going to get blamed for it! Let me know if and when the Saudi Ambassador calls, I want to make sure that Raghead got the message!"

Chapter 22

Dateline Washington, DC 04/26/2008

Arnold knew the Saudi Ambassador would be calling today, so he left instructions with his secretary that the Saudi Ambassador should be scheduled at least an hour after he called, to give Arnold a chance to put a plan into play. Then he called Ronnie into the room, and told him his idea. "Arnold, that is an excellent idea - I'll implement your suggestion at once." Ronnie left the Oval Office to walk into his office and use the secure phone. After making plans, he hung up, leaned back and put his feet up on the desk with a self-satisfied smile.

A couple of hours later, the Saudi Ambassador called, requesting an urgent meeting. The secretary fiddled with papers like she was looking for something, then said that the next available slot wasn't until noon. The Saudi Ambassador said that would be fine, and hung up. As soon as he broke the connection, Arnold's personal secretary buzzed his private line, and told Arnold the meeting was set for noon. Arnold thanked her and released the button. Then Arnold buzzed Ronnie's room, told him the meeting was at noon, and Ronnie told him he'd have everything ready by then.

The Saudi Ambassador arrived promptly at 11:45 am, was admitted through the VIP gate, and was escorted by the Secret Service to the waiting area outside the Oval Office. Arnold's secretary buzzed a hidden intercom button to let the President know the Ambassador was there, then told the Ambassador it would be a few minutes.

At precisely 12 noon, the doors to the Oval Office opened, and the visitor was escorted in. As he looked around the room, he saw the Director of the CIA, and his National Security Advisor. A sterling silver teapot sat on a trolley next to the President's desk. He got up and shook the Ambassador's hand. The Ambassador returned the handshake, but was confused by the outward civility of someone who he thought of as an Infidel, and an uncouth barbarian. The President asked if he wanted tea, and when the Ambassador nodded, a butler in formal dress poured him a cup and handed it to the Ambassador ceremoniously. When he finished, he set his teacup down, indicating he was ready to get down to business. Arnold spoke first, "Mr. Ambassador, what do we owe the honor of this meeting to?"

Taken aback, the Ambassador was speechless for a minute. When he found his voice, he said, "Mr. President, last night, the Royal Yachts blew up under mysterious circumstances. We have yet to reach any conclusions, but the evidence is pointing to foul play."

"Oh, really Mr. Ambassador, why would you say that?"

"Both vessels blew up within seconds of each other, and there was chemical evidence of a high explosive found in the debris."

"How unfortunate, Mr. Ambassador, would you like our assistance investigating the incident; I'm sure we could make the FBI forensics lab available."

"That really isn't necessary, Mr. President. We feel our Forensic labs are adequate for the task."

“OK, if it wasn’t to ask for our help, why are you here? Much as I like the diversion, I have a very busy schedule.”

“Very well, Mr. President, I’ll get right to the point. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia suspects the United States of blowing up the Royal Yachts.”

“And how did you reach that conclusion, you just said that your investigation is incomplete?”

“Mr. President, our forensics labs were able to identify the explosives used in the blast. I’m sad to report that it matches the high explosives used in US munitions. As you know, the chemical signatures are like fingerprints. And this explosive is only used by 3 countries, the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.”

“How do you know the explosive wasn’t stolen?”

“Mr. President, we also found bomb fragments indicating a precision machined steel casing, and your average run-of-the mill terrorist doesn’t have access to that equipment.”

“Mr. Ambassador, let me be frank! We received information that the Oil Ministry was ordered to deliberately slow production of oil, so to delay shipment of oil. This would be a perfect excuse to delay repayment of your massive debt to the United States. If you remember correctly, I had 2 conditions in our settlement. 1) We intend to get paid the money the King promised, and 2) this agreement must be an absolute secret! Violation of that agreement would entitle us to drop a Nuclear Bomb on Riyadh or other suitable target in Saudi Arabia. I decided to be merciful and give the King an object lesson that messing with the US has consequences. Make sure the King gets the message! Good Day!”

With that, the doors opened, and the Secret Service escorted the Ambassador out of the White House without a further word.

Dateline Elko Nevada

Sarah got up to make breakfast, and turned on the radio. News of the destruction of the Royal Saudi yachts had reached the wire services, and AP had the story as the lead of their hourly news update. Puzzled, Sarah wondered why anyone would want to blow up a boat.

Chapter 23

Dateline Washington, DC Later that Afternoon

The Saudi Ambassador called the King on his private line as soon as he got into his limousine. Since he was using his personal scrambled cellular phone, he thought the conversation was secure, but several technicians at Fort Meade were trying to prove him wrong.

“Your Highness, I need to speak to you on an urgent manner, please forgive my rudeness by calling on your private line, but you must know what I am calling about, and the absolute need for security!”

“Yes...yes, go ahead!”

“Thank you your Highness. I just got out of a most disturbing meeting with the American President, the Director of the CIA, and the National Security Advisor. The gist of the meeting is President Schwarzenegger told me to my face that they were responsible for blowing up both of the Royal yachts!”

“Why in Allah’s name would they do that for?”

“Your Highness, the Director of the CIA said they got information that we were going to deliberately slow oil production to delay payments. Arnold said that he decided to be merciful and blow up the yachts instead of carrying out his threat to blow up Riyadh!”

“How dare he threaten the Kingdom and the birthplace of the Prophet?”

“Your Highness, He is unlike any other President except Ronald Reagan. You remember what he was like? President Schwarzenegger is just like him, but has a bigger ego, and a very great sense of his personal power due to his immense size. I’m positive that if we push him further, he will carry out his threat!”

“Very well, thank you for your report. Good day.”

Suddenly the Saudi Ambassador was listening to a dial tone, so he hung up. He shuddered at the thought of Arnold blowing up Riyadh or Mecca. He knew that Arnold really was crazy enough to do it! He prayed to Allah that the king understood that another attempt to delay payment or any other breach of their agreement probably would result in the destruction of Riyadh and Mecca. If that were to happen, all Hell would break loose, and it was his job as a diplomat to make sure that didn’t happen.

Dateline Elko, NV later that afternoon

As Sarah was preparing dinner, the GMRS base station radio started blaring “Randy calling John, CODE RED Randy calling John, CODE RED!!!”

Sarah dashed over to the radio, and picked it up, “Randy this is Sarah - What’s happening?”

“Sarah, get John, we were just attacked by about 50 raiders, we repulsed the attack, killed about half of them, but I lost a ranch hand. They were last seen headed over your way!”

“Randy, thanks for the information. I’ll tell John! Anyone wounded?”

“Just a couple of flesh wounds we can take care of. Just wanted to give you a heads-up!”

“Thanks Randy, I’ll pray for you!”

“You do that Sarah, God Bless!” As Randy signed off, Sarah switched frequencies to their “general alert” frequency.

“Code Red, man all OP’s! John, Randy just called, they drove off an attack by about 50 raiders, killed half of them, but he thinks they might be heading over this way.” As John ran into the kitchen, Jennifer grabbed her Mini-14 and manned her OP. Alex grabbed his favorite hunting rifle, and covered the back. John took his M-1a out of the safe, swapped the night scope for the day scope, and put on his assault vest full of 20 round magazines, and ran out to the bunk house where he got in position, took out the detonators, and connected them to the wires. He stepped outside the bunkhouse, and blew his whistle 3 times, the code that the weapons were armed, and no one was to enter the blast zone. Bill joined him a minute later with his AK-47, and Sarah and Jean both uncased the spare AR-15’s and slid on their Assault vests with 20 30-rd magazines full of JHP NATO 5.56 ammo. Lisa appeared a few seconds later, and grabbed an AR-15 and an assault vest as well. They would stay in the center of the house where it was safe, unless they were needed as a reaction force.

Sarah was never so scared in all her life, and she realized that it was because she had nothing to do, all she could do was wait. She broke out a deck of cards, then laughed as she realized they were John’s “Survival Cards” with survival info on the backs. At least they weren’t the cards he had bought as a joke years ago that had pictures of naked women on the back!

They stayed at full alert for an hour, and finally John came on the radio, and asked Jennifer and Alex if they could see anything. Both replied in the negative, so John ordered them to “Stand Down” which meant that half of them would still watch the surrounding area, while the other half went back to doing regular stuff. John walked in the front door to talk to Sarah alone.

“Sarah, I know they’re out there, I bet they are waiting for dark, since the daylight attack at the other ranch was a disaster for them. Bill and I will take rotating shifts in the bunkhouse. I need Jean to spell Jennifer in her OP, and I need you to cover for Alex. That will leave Lisa as Backup. We’ll do this in 4-hour shifts like we said. Until further notice, no one but Bill and I go outside. I want everyone in the house to keep away from the windows in case they have a long-range rifle. I need to talk to Randy.” John sat down, grabbed a glass of ice water, and called Randy on

the GMRS radio. “Randy this is John, Over.”

“John, this is Randy, go ahead!”

“Any update on the situation?”

“Glad you called! One of my ranch hands followed them for about a ¼ mile, and saw them getting into a old beat-up truck and driving out of here toward town. I called the description into the Sheriff’s office, and they said they were way too short-handed to send an officer, but they’d issue a BOLO for the vehicle. It was a dark blue 1988 Chevy Truck with chrome side pipes. I’d suggest shooting that vehicle on sight, since they opened fire on us without warning!”

“Randy, Sarah told me you had a casualty. I’m really sorry! Was it anyone I know?”

“It was Hector, my head ranch hand. We’ve been good friends for over 20 years!”

“Oh God, I’m sorry! Hector was a friend to me too! If I see the SOB’s who killed him, I’ll make sure to give them a little personal payback for Hector.”

“John, I’m really going to miss that old geezer! After my father died, he became a surrogate father to me! If I see any of those SOB’s it will be personal!”

“Randy, How are you fixed for defenses?”

“Not as well as we’d like, we have a few shotguns and rifles, but nothing really long distance or terribly devastating.”

John was in a real quandary - Randy was like his best friend, but he didn’t know if he could tell him about the high-explosive cache he had on the property. Finally loyalty and self-preservation won out “Randy, I don’t know how to tell you this, but I have some stuff that will even the score. I’m sure you’ve messed around with explosives before?”

“Of course I have - what did you have in mind?”

How about a couple of black powder cannons?

“You’re kidding, right?”

“Not even! Tell you what, I’ll make up 4 of them for you, and drive them out to the boundary of our property. I’ll leave them wrapped in a tarp. I’ll call when they are done, and you can pick them up the next day to eliminate any chance of contamination.”

“Thanks, John - I don’t know what to say!”

“I just pray you never need to use them! Talk to you later!”

As he put the GMRS radio back in the recharger, Sarah was looking at him like she was ready to kill him! “I thought you were through monkeying around with high-explosives?”

“So did I, but this changes things, Randy doesn’t have enough firepower to safely defend his ranch, and we don’t have the guns to loan him, but I CAN make a couple of cannons! Besides, these aren’t as dangerous as the other stuff. It ‘s just a 4 foot section of black pipe, capped on one end, with a couple of pounds of black powder and a box of nails, and misc. nuts and bolts. I’m going to wait until tomorrow to work on these.”

“I knew it! Dr. Jekyll’s going into his “Mad Scientist Laboratory” again!”

John did a pretty lame impersonation of Boris Karloff, but Sarah laughed anyway.

Dateline Saudi Arabia 4/27/2008

King Faud was in his chambers, and he was Livid! “How DARE that Infidel Dog threaten to blow us up like that! Where is Mohammed al Saud?”

A flunky who definitely did not want to be there told the King, “Your Royal Highness, No one seems to know where he is.”

The King yelled, “Get out, and don’t come back until you find him!”

The flunky, relieved that he was leaving the palace alive, bowed and scraped, and made his way out as quickly as possible. The King pulled his secure cellular phone out of his pocket, and dialed the number for his head of security. “Achmed, I need to know where Mohammed al Saud is. When you find him, bring him to me!”

Dateline Pyongyang North Korea 4/27/2008

Kim Chong-il met with his advisers, “Gentlemen, the Islamic Freedom Fighters have given us a great opportunity to reunite with our oppressed brothers to the south! While America is weakened by this virus, I propose we implement Red Phoenix as soon as we can. They are recalling units from all over the world to deal with this virus attack, and they should be recalling several divisions from the south soon.”

General Lee, the head of the People’s Army spoke next.

“Dear Leader, you know that is a Winter attack plan!”

“I don’t CARE what plan it is! We have to strike while America is disorganized and weak, If we wait until winter, they may have recovered.”

“That would cause massive casualties among our troops!”

“What do you care General Lee, It’s not Your neck on the front lines! Unless you want to lead from the front. I can arrange for you to be in the front lines!”

“Very well, Dear Leader, it will be as you say - I will take your plan to the Central Planning Committee and tell them we need to implement Red Phoenix as soon as possible.”

“I want a battle plan ready to go in two weeks, I want you to personally brief me on Red Phoenix in two weeks!”

“Yes, Dear Leader, it will be as you say!” General Lee bowed and quickly exited the room. He knew Red Phoenix would be doomed to failure, so he needed to use the time he had to arrange for someone else to take the fall when it failed.

Dateline Paris France later that day

: President Jacques Chirac was on the phone with the Saudi Ambassador to France “What have you found out about our Supertanker?”

“My dear President Chirac, so far we don’t know why your supertanker was destroyed. The same blast destroyed both our Royal Yachts. We have a team of experts combing through the wreckage as we speak to try and find out what happened.”

As soon as you know anything, please let me know!”

“Yes, Mr. President, good day!”

Chapter 24

Dateline Elko, April 28, 2008

Everyone gathered in the dining room for Breakfast, and afterward, John spent a private minute with Sarah before he went out to his “Mad Scientist’s Laboratory”.

“Sarah, I promise I’ll be careful! I have to do this; I promised Randy that I’d make them for him. Besides, this isn’t near as dangerous as the other stuff. I can do all the cutting and welding in the shop. The only dangerous part will be when I pour the black powder into the barrels, and load the shrapnel into the barrel, but I have an idea that will make it safer - do you have any old tee shirts I can use? If I wrap the shrapnel charge in a tee shirt, it can’t make contact with the barrel and spark. That would be way safer than the way I was going to do it!”

Sarah realized John had to make these cannons, but she didn’t have to like it! She gave John a big hug, then walked into their closet, took out the “rag bag” and extracted 4 large tee shirts, because she remembered he needed to make 4 cannons. She handed them to John without a word. John gave her another hug and a kiss, then told her not to try calling him, because he had to have his radio off for safety reasons. Bill was going to be in charge of the defenses until he got back in an hour or two. John had already pre-cut the pipe to length, and all he had to do was thread the caps on, drill the caps, and weld them in place. He decided it would be safer to use waterproof cannon fuse for these cannons instead of rocket motor igniters, since he didn’t know if Randy knew how to use a twist detonator, and he might need the few he had for later if one of his went bad.

Randy walked out the door, and walked over to his laboratory, called Bill while he was still a safe distance from the laboratory, and told him where he’d be and how long. Bill was disappointed that he couldn’t help the Mad Scientist. John told him he had more important things to do, like protect their families! That placated Bill, and John signed off, then turned off his radio. He walked into his garage, put the radio on the charger inside the garage, and started manhandling pipe. Half an hour later, he had them threaded down tight, drilled, and welded. Now came the fun part. He walked over to the drawer, opened it, and stuck his index finger in the sensor, the light turned green, and he opened the Laboratory door. Leaving the door open, he grabbed 4 pounds of black powder, and carried it to the cannons. Next he brought out a hundred foot roll of waterproof cannon fuse, and some quickset putty to plug the hole. Finally, he carried about 20 pounds of nuts, bolts, old rusty nails and other nefarious implements to stuff down the barrel. First, he cut the cannon fuse in quarters, stuck an inch into the drilled hole in the cap, puttied it closed, then while the putty hardened, he divided the shrapnel into 4 equal parts, and wrapped them in a single layer of tee shirt material. When the putty had dried, he carefully poured a pound of black powder down each barrel, slid the shirt-wrapped shrapnel package down the barrel, and tamped it down with a broomhandle. Finally, he taped visqueen over the barrel with duct tape to waterproof it. When he finished an hour later, he decided that he should run them over to Randy’s property line. He grabbed his radio, walked 50 feet outside the garage, and called Bill for a Sitrep. Bill said “All’s quiet on the Western Front”. They had worked out radio codes so if they were captured, and forced to transmit, anyone listening would not know except people who were supposed to. This phrase was the “All Clear” signal. If he had said “All’s Quiet on the

Eastern Front” John would know that Bill had been captured, and they were in deep kimchee! John told Bill he was going to run the cannons over to the edge of Randy’s property, and he’d be gone an additional ½ hour, and to tell Sarah so she wouldn’t worry. John grabbed the tractor and trailer, loaded the cannons facing the rear just in case, and drove slowly over to the fence line. When he got there, he looked around carefully, and there was no one there, so he proceeded to unload the cannons. Then he drove away, put the tractor up, and walked back in the house. Sarah was waiting, and gave him a big kiss and hug, then John promised Sarah that this should be the last time for a while! Sarah decided to let it slide, and they went in to check on the kids doing their schoolwork, then John called Randy and let him know the cannons were near the gate between their properties. Randy thanked John profusely, and then John told him how to bury the cannons, and that they were fused and ready to go, and he used waterproof canon fuse, so he could bury it. Randy promised to pick it up the next day, and hung up. John remembered he had the night shift at the bunkhouse OP, so he checked his National Match M-1a and made sure his night vision scope was securely attached, and all the magazines were full of JHP rounds. John remembered something his Father told him. “When it comes down to you or the other guy - never fight fair!” In survival situations, John took every advantage he could. Once he checked his equipment, he checked on everyone, and went into the bedroom to get some sleep.

John woke up for dinner, ate with the family, then Sarah poured him a big thermos of coffee, and he grabbed his Assault vest, his cased National Match M-1a and walked out to the bunkhouse. Since it was now dark, they had no lights showing in the house, and the OP’s were lit with small red LED lights so as not to ruin their night vision. At 7:00, John exchanged places with Bill, who looked like he could use some sleep. Bill said Goodnight, and walked out the door. John set up under the red led, then once he was set up, turned it off and sat in the dark, letting his eyes totally dark adapt. Around 8:00, John started scanning the front of the house looking for movement. His job was much easier due to a ¾ moon, and no cloud cover. If anyone attacked tonight, he could see them coming from a long ways off.

John drank his first cup of coffee around midnight, then when he resumed his search, he thought he saw movement by the fence line. Whoever it was wasn’t being very smart! They climbed over the fence instead of cutting it, or crawling under it, skylining themselves against the brighter background due to the ¾ moon. They were over a quarter mile away, and then he saw their rifles, and he figured it was the dirtbags that had attacked Randy’s place yesterday! He got on the radio, woke everyone up, and told them “NO LIGHTS!” He didn’t want to give a sucker an even break! John was glad that he had told everyone who was asleep to keep a red LED light on a lanyard around their wrists. Everyone got quickly dressed, and manned their battle stations. No lights showed from the house, and no one made a sound as they got ready. John told Alex to scan the backyard and look for someone sneaking in the back way! Alex didn’t see anyone, and he knew how to spot someone trying to be stealthy! John realized these dirtbags must REALLY be dumb - they were trying a frontal assault! As John studied them, he identified the leader, who was armed with an AK-47, and noticed the rest of the dirtbags only had SKS’s ! Well that made his job much easier, he’d engage them while they were still out of their range.

John got on the radio again with a SITREP, and a count of the enemy they were facing. He counted 22, and figured Randy did a good job cutting this group down to size with their barely adequate weapons. John told everyone he would engage as they got within 400 yards, and every-

one else was to hold fire until they got into guaranteed kill range of their weapons. Alex quickly set down his AK, walked to the gun closet and picked up his Browning A-Bolt .308 rifle with a BOSS unit, and a huge 3x12x50AO Leupold scope, then grabbed 50 rounds of JHP ammo. Alex knew he too could engage anyone at 400 yards with that weapon, and wanted to help his Dad. John told him to set up in their bedroom, but not to shoot until he did! Jennifer and everyone else was armed with .223/5.56 NATO weapons, and would be out of this fight unless they got within 300 yards. Sarah was grateful since she knew her conscience would trouble her if she had to kill someone, but she could do it in a heartbeat to defend her children!

While Alex was getting set up, John checked the range, they were out at 450 yards, and didn't seem to be in a big hurry - then he noticed the guy with the AK-47 gesturing wildly for them to hurry up! John thought the rest of the dirtbags might be a little skittish after their last encounter. Right as they crossed the 400 yard line, John centered his sights on the head of the leader, and gently squeezed the trigger. His gun roared in the enclosed building, but John watched the Leader's head disintegrate! A second later, another dirtbag bit the dust - Alex must have got him! John sighted in on another dirtbag, and as the gun roared, another dirtbag bit the dust! Alex was shooting slower due to his bolt action rifle, but he was getting almost as many kills as his Dad. Within a few minutes, every one of the dirtbags was on the ground, and most were decapitated by head shots. The last one standing turned and ran, but ran straight away. John decided he had better get all of them since he didn't need trouble, and ended up hurrying up the shot, and instead of a head shot, blew out the center of his chest! John knew he was dead, so he didn't have to fire a follow-up shot. John continued to scan the area, but couldn't locate anyone moving in his Vietnam Surplus Starlight scope. Half an hour later, he sent the "all clear" and everyone stood down. John unloaded and engaged the safety on his rifle, then carried it into the house. Alex was waiting for him. "Son, that was some excellent shooting you did. You've never killed anyone before, so be prepared for some mixed feelings about this. You WILL feel exhilaration, sadness, anger, maybe even remorse for what you did. Just remember those feelings are normal, and the dirtbags you shot were trying to kill us, and it was us or them." With that John hugged his son, then Sarah held him for a while, telling him "It's Alright".

Finally Alex told his Mom "Mom, I'm OK - it was just like shooting at the range, except for the reactive targets! I really couldn't see anyone's faces, they were just targets in the moonlight! I'm really OK about this! Don't worry about me, I'll be fine!"

John went back into the bunkhouse to spend the rest of his watch in the OP, and Alex went back to watching the back. Alone with his thoughts, Alex started re-living the shooting. His dad was right - he was feeling one way one minute, and the next he'd feel something else. He realized that this was post-shooting jitters combined with the after-effects of a major adrenaline rush. By the time the sun rose, Alex was feeling very different than he did that night!

They all gathered for breakfast the next morning, and John noticed Alex was being more quiet than usual. After breakfast, John took Alex into his room, sat him down, talked to him and prayed with him. Alex volunteered to don some protective gear and bury the bodies, but John said he'd do it. He realized that Alex was undergoing Post shooting trauma, and he needed to work it out himself. John told Alex that if he needed to talk to either him or Sarah, to go right ahead. John gave his son a big hug, then went out back, fired up the tractor, donned a gas mask and Tyvek overalls, and drove over to where the dirtbags had fallen. He dug a big hole, pushed

the bodies into it with the front loader, then buried them deep. 2 hours later, he drove the tractor back to the garage, took off his protective gear, and walked back into the house. Sarah had all the teenagers in the basement studying. She met John at the door, and told him Alex was still acting “funny”. John told her to keep an eye on him, but not to say anything unless Alex asked her for help. “Sarah, I’ve gone through this, and it’s just something he’s going to have to work through himself. I’m just glad you or Jennifer didn’t have to shoot!” When he finished talking to his wife, John got on the radio, and called Randy, and told him that they were attacked last night, and he thinks they got rid of the rest of the gang! Randy was grateful, and told John that he’d pick up the cannons later that day.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully, and at dusk, John made the decision to go back to normal operations, and only have one OP at night, since Randy still had their backside covered. The good news was that everyone could get some sleep - that is except Bill and John, who would alternate staying in the bunkhouse on guard at night. They went to a 6 on 6 off schedule so both of them would get at least 6 hours of sleep a night.

Sarah made a special dinner of roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn with garlic butter sauce, and sourdough bread. As they ate, Alex seemed better, so John hoped he had worked things out.

Chapter 25

"After two months in office, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and First Lady of California, Maria Shriver, are being called the next JFK and Jackie Kennedy." The "Star" newspaper reported on February 9, 2004.

These lines had jumped off the pages across the nation in grocery store and convenience store lines in the months following the "Governator's" ascent into office in California. They had almost a prophetic note as another actor became president in subsequent years.

The fairy tale career of Arnold continued the tradition of Camelot as Congress moved to change the Constitution to allow immigrants to become President. Perhaps the interest of JFK was being fulfilled as he had expressed it in his book, "A Nation of Immigrants." This idea, that immigrants could become anything--even President, became Senator Edward Kennedy's theme in the ensuing months whenever he could speak across his own alcohol thickened tongue and cloudy brain in a coherent sentence.

Those who had been close friends of Jackie Kennedy commented without taking a breath that Maria not only presented herself well and wore top designer clothes, but she seemed very supportive of her husband's career. This was a very open comparison to JFK and Jackie. These friends were so glad to get rid of the cowboy from Texas and his homespun wife.

Many Democrats reached out to the new President as if he was one of their own. Of course he was, on social and moral issues. The newspapers adopted Arnold and joined in the theme of a reconstructed Camelot with Maria as its Guenevere.

However, the dust hadn't settled on the ballrooms of the inauguration parties before the opportunists within the hard core liberal ranks who viewed themselves as the power behind the throne with each Democratic President began to scheme. They speculated on how they could use Maria's parents, Eunice and Sergeant Shriver, to get a connection to Arnold. Eunice was Senator Edward Kennedy and JFK's sister. They spent hours concentrating on the best strategy to get into Arnold's bedroom to twist the policy and decisions through Maria of this new King of the Roundtable.

"We need to get with Sergeant and Eunice. They're easily the most liberal of the Kennedy Clan." The hawk faced man, called Wayne, spoke with a roughness in his voice and his narrowed flinty eyes spoke more sharply than his voice to the five men clustered in a booth in one of the less notable bars of the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C. Not many congressmen came to this dark hole unless they wanted anonymity.

"But do you think they'll help us get to Maria, she's their daughter." A younger man in a slick Patriot's Team jacket questioned Wayne.

Wayne sneered as he responded, "Why do you think they helped him get elected to the governorship and the President? So their pretty little daughter could ride in nice limousines and wave to the crowds? Arnie is filthy rich...she had all that before he became governor. Do you think

they wanted a REPUBLICAN governor or president?

The younger man tried to recover, "Well, there's lots of money in it." He glanced around the smoky bar but no seemed close enough to hear what he was about to say next. "The Saudi's will pay big bucks to get a channel into the White House."

Another of the group at the table spoke up. "I've had indications that Sergeant Shriver.."

"Don't use names, you fool." Wayne had interrupted. He didn't like working with these amateurs. They knew more than anyone else that the walls had ears in Washington and even in Georgetown. But he needed these contacts with the Kennedy Clan and the other political hacks to do this job. It was so much easier just to be given a name and told to erase that person. "If we do this right, we can all buy an island in the South Pacific and retire." Wayne knew the Saudi's would pay enormous sums for information and influence. He was also thinking he could cut a side deal with those Frenchies, too.

The Frenchies were still upset about Iraq. They didn't care about the people there just their investments. And there were some strange things happening. Like that French supertanker blowing up. Wayne hadn't pinned it down yet but his sources were working overtime. He didn't like not knowing what was going on.

The meeting broke up with the resolution that Wayne would seek a way to get to the Shrivvers. As soon as the meeting broke up, Wayne was on a secure cell phone making calls, and calling in favors. Within an hour he had the information he wanted.

Wayne had found his weak link in Maria's uncle Teddy. Despite what the public was told about Chappaquidic, Someone had swapped the coroner's reports, and had kept the original. Now Wayne was calling in a marker to get the original. What he read made him very happy.

The next week's meeting was much more productive, and Wayne was told to proceed with his new connection. A few days later, a fragment of the original coroner's report showed up in the Senator's mail, along with a phone number. Wayne was no idiot, and the phone number was a cutout. When Ted dialed the number, he got a recorded message to be at a certain location at a certain time, and he would be met. When Ted showed, he was met by another cutout who drove him somewhere, who passed him to another cutout, while Wayne's operatives checked for tails and bugs. When they determined that Senator Kennedy's tail was clear, the car's cell phone rang twice, then once, then twice. It was a code to drive to a certain location that was only referred to on the map by a number. It turned out to be a safe house for the shadowy organization Wayne worked for.

Senator Kennedy was tired and flustered when he was shown into the Georgetown estate by the butler. Wayne still didn't meet directly with the Senator, knowing the blackmail victim would do anything to identify his blackmailer. Senator Kennedy was lead to a small library, with a princess phone on an end table, and a bottle of fine scotch and a crystal tumbler with a note to make himself comfortable. Knowing the Senator was a staggering drunk when not in public, Wayne had hedged his bets, and provided the means to further reduce any threat to himself by letting Teddy get stupid drunk before he talked to him. After the Senator had several drinks, the phone

rang. Wayne was speaking through a voice synthesizer that thoroughly disguised his voice while leaving it understandable.

“Senator Kennedy, we need you to convince your niece to pass information to us. If you succeed in this mission, the evidence of your murder of the lady in your car at Chappaquidic will disappear. We will also be using the services of Senator Clinton. You may not discuss the terms of your recruitment with anyone, or else the coroner’s report will be made public. If you fail or try to track down anyone involved in this project, the report will be made public. Is that clear? When you are finished, the butler will see you out and give you a cell phone with a pre-programmed number to call in information. If you use it for any other purpose, the report will be made public. Goodbye!”

A couple of hours, and the rest of the bottle of scotch later, Senator Kennedy was escorted to the limousine, and driven home. The next morning Senator Kennedy put his plans in motion. He knew that Maria spent weekends at her parent’s house in the Hamptons, without Arnold - who told her that if he went there one more time, he might strangle the next “Whiny-Ass Liberal” he met!

Senator Kennedy was always welcomed at the Shriver’s estate, so when his personal secretary called, they quickly agreed that he could stay the weekend. Eunice made a note to herself to order another case of Scotch - Teddy was a complete lush, and drank Scotch like Eunice drank water.

That weekend, Senator Kennedy made his play, and talked Maria, who he was closer to than any other member of the Kennedy Clan, into telling him anything she heard.

Maria returned to DC on Monday, and there was a handwritten note on Senate stationery inviting her to lunch at the Palm room, one of the most exclusive DC restaurants. Maria wondered what Hillary wanted, but since she admired her so much, Maria called back and gladly accepted. Hillary met her promptly at 1:00 pm, and the Matre de escorted them to a secluded and isolated private room. After they had ordered, Hillary made her pitch.

“Maria, I just admire you so much, but several of us Democratic Senators are worried that Arnold might be starting his own private war. I’m sure you heard of the bombing of those poor holy men in Saudi Arabia! I’ve got it on good information that your husband ordered the killing of innocent civilians instead of the terrorists that caused this virus. We’d like to keep tabs on him to keep him from starting WWII over this. I would so much appreciate it if you would keep me posted if he’s thinking of doing anything else rash. When she finished her monologue, they ate lunch without another word, except idle chit-chat and girl-talk. Maria looked up to Hillary so much that she’d do anything for her, besides, she was a Senator, and she was supposed to know everything, so she saw nothing wrong with telling her what Arnold told her in private.

Two weeks later, Arnold and Maria were in bed, and Arnold let it slip that the US was responsible for bombing the mullahs. He didn’t even realize he said it, and soon fell asleep. The next day, Maria called her Uncle Teddy to tell him.

Dateline Washington DC The Next Morning

When Arnold got into the Oval Office, he turned on CNN. "American Morning" had just started, and the lead story was a leak from a "highly placed source" claimed that the Schwarzenegger Administration was behind the bombing of the Saudi Mullahs and the Saudi Royal Yachts. They then cut to an interview with the senior Democratic Senator "We didn't know anything about it, I've got no comment."

"Son of A Bitch!!!"

Two seconds later the head of Arnold's Secret Service detail charged into the room with his gun drawn. "Are you OK, Mr. President?"

"Sorry, Jim - Those traitorous bastards on CNN just leaked a story that might start WWII. Can you get Ronnie in here Right Now, then clear the hall - we need to have a private conversation."

"Yes, Mr. President" Jim said as he was hurrying to get Ronnie. Whenever the President said "Right NOW" Jim treated it as a National Emergency, just in case it was. 2 minutes later, Ronnie was in the Oval Office.

"Ronnie, by any chance were you just watching CNN?"

"Mr. President, I have the whole thing on tape - we routinely tape CNN, ABC, CBS, and other station's feeds. I can't believe even THEY would be that irresponsible! I'll tell you one thing, we have a huge leak that needs to get plugged right now!"

"Ronnie, I've got an excellent idea to smoke out the leak. Did you see "Clear and Present Danger where Jack Ryan smoked out the leak - it was so elegant, I'm surprised the CIA doesn't use it - It's called the Canary Trap. Basically, you give different versions of the same story to all the people who you suspect of leaking, and whatever version comes out will tell you the leak! Can we do something like that?"

"Mr. President, not only can we, but I would love to catch the Traitorous SOB that leaked that information. I'll set it up. Mr. President, I don't know how to tell you this, but did you ever think it might be Maria?"

"You're Kidding, Right?"

"Unfortunately not, Arnold. You know who her uncle is, and she's tighter than I would like with the Clintons as well. Do I have your permission to put her on the list?"

"Ronnie, I doubt it's her, but go ahead. Just let me be the one to plant the leak on her."

"Very well, I'll get back to you later with what to tell her if she asks."

"Thanks Ronnie - I won't forget this!"

A couple of hours later, Ronnie handed Arnold a 3x5 index card with a short phrase that he

needed to say word for word - Arnold looked at it, and realized Ronnie really knew what he was doing - this piece of misinformation was so juicy that the leak couldn't resist leaking it.

Later that night in bed, Arnold was ranting about the stuff happening in Saudi Arabia. When Maria asked him what he was going to do, he dropped the trap phrase on her. He hated himself for doing it, but realized that Maria may have been the leak, but someone else was probably using her. After a while, they went to bed.

The next morning, the lead story on CNN was about the 113 casualties from the bombing incident. Arnold's heart fell, since Ronnie had given that figure to him as the trap phrase for Maria. A few minutes later, Ronnie walked in. "Arnold, I heard. I'm so very sorry! What do you want to do?"

"We need to get her alone and confront her - I'm sure she is being used by someone who's out to get me, but I need to hear it from her. Can you check out a car, and meet us at the back entrance in 5 minutes. You can tell the Secret Service that they can have lead and chase cars, but no one in the vehicle. I hope you passed your E&E driving refresher because you are driving the limo."

"OK, I'll make the arrangements and see you out back in 5 minutes."

Arnold left the Oval Office, walked to the Residence, and woke Maria up, got her dressed, and down to the back exit without anyone interfering. Arnold realized just how much clout Ronnie had with the Secret Service when he pulled up in the limo and there was no one else in the vehicle. Arnold held the door open for Maria, then got in himself. As they drove away, Maria became alarmed because there wasn't any Secret Service agents in the vehicle. and she didn't trust Ronnie because she had heard rumors from her uncle about him. 5 minutes later they pulled into a secluded park, and the Secret Service quickly cordoned off the area, but stayed 50 feet away as Ronnie had asked.

As Ronnie shut off the ignition. the doors locked automatically, so they couldn't open from the inside. Maria tried to open her door and started panicking when she couldn't open it!

"What are you doing Arnold? Why am I being held a prisoner?"

Arnold replied to his wife, the words hurt him as much as her. "Maria - have you been telling stuff to your uncle or anyone else you shouldn't have?"

"What do you mean? I talk to my uncle all the time!"

Ronnie spoke up "Maria, Why did you tell someone that there were 113 casualties in the bombing in Saudi Arabia?"

Maria continued to play dumb "I didn't tell anyone - I don't know what you are talking about you warmongering fascist!"

That set Arnold off, he drew his Para Ord P-16 from his concealed holster.

"Maria, the people you leaked that information to are guilty of treason, that makes you guilty by association. Unless you come clean right NOW, your life could be in danger!"

Maria started freaking out, she hated guns, and didn't know Arnold was armed.

Ronnie lowered the boom "Maria, in time of war, treason is punishable by death, and either Arnold or I could legally shoot you were you stand. I know Arnold couldn't shoot you, but I COULD! Now start talking!"

Maria looked into Ronnie's eyes and saw Death staring back at her, she new that Ronnie was totally Psycho.

"OK, don't kill me, I'll talk, I don't see what the big deal was anyway, all I told them was the answers to questions they could have gotten from Congress anyway! I mean you guys are trying to start a war, and they're trying to stop it! I know what Ronnie did in Vietnam - you Baby Killing War Criminal!"

Arnold stepped in before Ronnie lost his cool and shot her. "Maria, those people are using you - they couldn't give a Rat's Ass about anything but getting re-elected. I've already promised to only serve one term, so I don't care if I get re-elected or not! I'm here to do a dirty job and go home! Now who did you tell what to!

"I just told my Uncle Teddy and Senator Clinton about your secret little war in Saudi Arabia, I can't believe you would kill those Moslem Holy Men - Islam is a Religion of Peace!"

Ronnie had calmed back down by now, and jumped back in. "Maria - someone fed you a bunch of lies. We found financial documents showing 10 Billion in transfers from the Royal Saudi bank accounts in Switzerland to the accounts of the Watabe Mullahs, and a transfer of 10 million to the head of Iranian Security in the last 6 months."

"So, what's the big deal - the Saudis give money to Mullahs all the time."

"In this case, the money went to finance the attack on the United States, and the 10 million to the head of Iranian Security bought the virus that killed 1/3 of the American Population -including some friends of yours in New York City if I remember correctly!"

"No it can't be! They're peaceful, Teddy told me so!"

Arnold got back in the game, "Maria, I'll show you the proof when we get home. Was there anyone else you talked to?"

"No, that was it, the head of the DNC asked me a bunch of questions, but I clammed up! I told him it was none of his business were you were going in the next two weeks!"

Ronnie's eyes got as big as saucers when he heard that - he knew that Arnold wasn't very popular with the Democrats, and they were just stupid enough to try an assassination attempt! He'd heard rumors, but didn't tell Arnold about them. He needed to get back to the office ASAP and get hold of a few people.

By now Maria was crying "Those SOB's USED me!"

Arnold holstered his gun, and Ronnie got back in the driver's seat and started the car.

They drove back to the White House in silence. When they got back inside, Arnold left instructions that Maria wasn't to be disturbed, that all calls into and out of the Residence were to be blocked until further notice, and Maria wasn't to leave the residence without Arnold being with her. When they got to the Oval Office, Arnold turned to Ronnie.

"Please take care of this, you know what to do! I don't want to know how, I just want it done soon!"

Ronnie walked out of the Oval Office to his office, took a cellular phone out of his desk with a one-time pad security device on it, activated the anti-bugging devices in the room that he had installed, and made a phone call. When he disconnected the call, he dropped the phone in the metal trash can, and 5 seconds later, the phone melted into a blob of plastic.

Two days later, the New York Times reported the Suicide death of Senator Kennedy. He had driven off a bridge into the Chesapeake Bay, and had a BAC of over 18%. Police found a rambling incoherent suicide note in his office talking about his guilt over all the people he has killed, and how he was sorry he killed that girl in Chappaquiddic.

The next day, Senator Clinton was shot by the father of a 16 year old girl who was found naked underneath the Senator's nude body.

Chapter 26

Dateline Washington D.C. The next Morning

Arnold left Maria in bed, walked down to the Oval Office where he was greeted by Ronnie, his National Security Advisor.

“Ronnie, I know anytime you’re here before I am, and you want to see me first thing, I know its bad news - let’s go down to the Situation Room and discuss this.

“Excellent Idea, Mr. President!”

Together they walked to the Situation Room, and locked the door behind them.

As soon as they were seated, Ronnie began “Remember the other day, the off-hand comment Maria made about the DNC wanting to know your schedule? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but I think the people behind the throne want to eliminate you and replace you with the Vice President!”

“I knew I should have never agreed to run with that Liberal SOB - funny thing was the head of the DNC was the person who recommended him, and indicated that they would triple my funding for my election campaign. Anyway, what’s done is done - there’s NO way I’ll let them put Chuckie Schumer in as the next President!”

“Arnold - do you remember the circumstances behind your election, how Ted Kennedy stumped for the Constitutional Amendment to get you elected? And later all the favorable press, and the huge PAC contributions? How about the sycophants in the Senate practically fawning over your every word. Something was not right there. I didn’t have anything to do with your election, but now I can clearly see the electoral process was manipulated from the inside to get you elected instead of Ron Paul. Whoever has enough juice to get you elected under those terms also has enough juice to get you taken out if you displease or threaten them. Maybe having Ted and Hillary killed wasn’t such a great idea!”

“Ronnie, I wanted to send a message, now we’ll just have to deal with the consequences.”

“OK, but from now on, you wear your Level III vest 24/7 - even in the White House, and place Maria under protective custody - she should be kept incommunicado in the Residence, I’ll talk to the head of the Secret Service to make the arrangements. Also, make sure you swap out those JHP rounds in your P-16 for the Magsafes I gave you - you might have to shoot someone who is wearing a vest!”

“My God - you suspect they could get someone inside the Secret Service!”

“Arnold, why did you think I told you to wear your vest under your shirt even inside the White House?”

“Holy Cow Ronnie! OK, just make sure you find these Traitors and eliminate them. I’ll sign an EO to make it all legal - after all they are committing Treason by trying to assassinate the Presi-

dent in a time of war!”

“Thanks Arnold, I knew I could count on you! Now get back upstairs and change!”

Arnold hurried back up to the Residence, took off his shirt, and put on his vest. He hadn't worn a vest since he filmed True Lies, one of his last action movies. The insurance company insisted he wear a level III vest. It was overkill, but after the accidental death of Brandon Lee, the insurance companies had gotten “gun-shy”. Arnold took a box of ammo out of his dresser drawer, and reloaded both magazines with a specialty load that Ronnie got made by Magsafe in Washington State that was designed to penetrate a level IIa vest. Arnold felt ill just thinking that one of the people who was trusted to protect his and Maria's lives might betray that trust. He slid the P-16 back into the Kydex IWB holster that Sheath Mechanic had built for him. His holsters were now as famous as DeSantis, Bianchi and Galco. It was a deep-concealment holster, designed to be invisible, and it compromised the draw slightly for invisibility. It worked! In the years since being elected Governor, no one that Arnold didn't tell didn't know he was armed 24/7 even when he wore a tuxedo. Part of it was a brilliantly designed holster, and part of it was a genius of a tailor who could design clothes that looked form fitting, but carefully concealed his holster. As soon as he was finished getting dressed, Arnold made his way down to the Oval office to complete the rest of his morning. On his way down, he bumped into the Head of the Secret Service, who told Arnold not to worry, that Ronnie had explained the situation to him, and he would take care of everything, and would keep them out of danger.

Dateline Washington, DC Later that day.

The conspirators met at the same restaurant. To say they were upset was an understatement. “How did they find out? Who leaked?”

Wayne spoke next, he was livid! He was sick and tired of working with amateurs, and realized his reliance on them had blown the operation. He was half-right and was unable to see his own pride was the issue here! “The only way they could have gotten that information is if they had broken Maria! She's the weak link. I checked, and she has been in the White house since the other day, and all her appointments have been canceled.”

“My God, they're on to us - we need to leave the country!”

“SIT DOWN!! It's not over yet - we can still win!”

“How, Ted and Hillary are dead, the Shrivvers are in mourning, and we won't get any information out of Maria now that Arnold has her locked up in the White House.”

“You remember what we discussed several years ago when we first proposed this operation, that you insisted we get Chuck Schumer nominated as VP. The reason for that was a fail-safe in case Arnold went rogue on us and we had to take him out!”

One of the more senior members of the conspiracy stood up, “My God - you're talking about assassinating a Sitting President!”

“Well, it's happened at least twice before, and the Conspiracy Theorists were almost right about

the last one, but they have the wrong suspects!”

“You mean WE had Kennedy assassinated?”

“Of Course, he wouldn’t play ball with Vietnam, and he was an embarrassment with his open affairs. Then Marilyn threatened to talk, so we had to eliminate her too! The Party must survive! If we loose this, we might as well go home.”

“Wayne, you’re sure there is no other way?”

“Not in less you want to wind up with a bullet in your skull or spend the rest of your life in Leavenworth with a cellmate who would use you like a woman for the next 50 years!”

That got their attention. Self-preservation overrode all their other objections and in the end they voted for Wayne to carry out their “final option”.

As soon as the meeting broke up, Wayne got on his secure cell phone, and called a number he knew by memory. All he said was “the project is approved.” He then pushed a button, and dropped the phone in a trash can. 5 seconds later, the phone melted into a blob of plastic.

Two weeks later, as Arnold was making a visit to a major Democratic Fundraiser, shots rang out as he exited the limousine. Arnold was hit once in the chest, but his amazing physique allowed him to not only remain conscious, but to draw his weapon. A second volley range out, this time the Secret Service was returning fire. All of a sudden, out of the corner of his eye, Arnold saw an Agent he didn’t recognize turning toward him with his MP-10 pointed at him. Arnold reacted a split-second faster than the agent, and shot him right through the chest. The heavy 45 caliber slug did exactly as advertised, blew through the vest like tissue paper, and blew the agent’s heart out. 2 other agents quickly stuffed Arnold back in the limousine, and burned rubber back to the White house. Meanwhile, a white Suburban stopped, and zipped the dead agent’s body into a body bag. Ronnie met Arnold at the White house as soon as the medics released him. He’d have a bruise on his chest for a day or two, but otherwise he was fine. Ronnie appeared concerned when he spoke to Arnold. “Arnold, I think we’ve located the conspirators. The head of the conspiracy seems to be a rogue ex-CIA agent with the legend name of Wayne. He’s worked for some shadowy figures since being kicked out of the CIA 30 years ago for drug trafficking. Anyway, the NSA had his voice-print registered in Echelon, and just decoded an encrypted transmission. They positively ID’s his voice print, and the four word message “The project is approved.” While it’s not much to go on, he has been hanging out with some heavy hitters for the last couple of weeks, mostly the ultra-liberal faction of the DNC, and a few Liberal tycoons. I put a tail on him, and we located the restaurant he was going to. We also followed the same heavy hitters to the same restaurant within an hour of each other. We bribed one of the busboys after scaring the heck out of him, and he said they were meeting in the same room just two weeks ago, and again several weeks ago. I think we have our conspiracy.

“Very well, Ronnie, you have my EO on file, take care of the problem.”

Two days later, when the conspirators met again, the doors of the room splintered inward, and several quick coughing sounds were heard as the hit team cleaned up the conspirators with head

shots from their MP-5/10SD's. As soon as they were sure they were dead, they left the building. The story of the gangland style assassination quickly reached the papers.

Several days later, after Ronnie had found proof of the conspiracy in Wayne's briefcase, including the influence peddling, the attempts to turn Maria into a spy, and the payments from the Saudis, and the instructions for the hit on the President signed by the conspirators, Arnold notified the networks he wanted to address the nation.

Dateline Elko, NV 5:50 pm that evening

Sarah had the TV on when the Networks broke in with an announcement the President would address the nation. Sarah quickly called everyone into the Kitchen to hear the announcement. At 6:00 pm sharp, Arnold was speaking to the nation.

"My Fellow Americans. It is with a heavy heart that I reveal the results of the Secret Service, CIA, NSA and my National Security Advisor's investigation into the assassination attempt on my life last week. According to National Security Sources, there was a conspiracy in a small minority of the Democratic Party to control the White House, and me, and to funnel information to foreign powers who are not our allies. This resulted in the deaths of the conspirators by forces loyal to the US Constitution. This matter has been resolved to my satisfaction, and is NOT going to be subject to Congressional Scrutiny due to the National Security elements of the conspiracy. This matter is closed. Thank you and good night!"

Chapter 27

Dateline Elko, NV June 1, 2008

After John ate breakfast, he called Randy to check on him. Everything was fine at the ranch, but Randy had noticed he didn't hear any police or Sheriff radio traffic lately. Since the virus, the circuits had been swamped with calls, now all of a sudden, no traffic. Other people who used the repeaters were still broadcasting, so he knew the repeaters were still working. Alarmed, John told Randy he'd call him right back, hung up and dialed Rose at the Sheriff's Department. After about 20 rings, the Sheriff himself answered the phone. "Elko Sheriff's Department, Or what's left of it, Sheriff Johnson speaking!" When John stopped laughing, he asked if everything was OK. The Sheriff explained he had sent all his deputies home to protect their families, since he didn't have enough deputies to patrol safely. He was manning the radio, and had organized and deputized armed militias to protect and defend their property. They had ham radios, and the Sheriff assigned each group an unused frequency in the 2-meter band to send and receive messages from the Sheriff's Department. John asked the Sheriff what they were doing with the prisoners.

"What prisoners? The County Commissioners declared a State of Emergency right before I started deputizing militias. They have orders to treat any looters, rapists or murderers with extreme prejudice."

"What about trials and civil rights?"

"The ones that surrender are getting some of the shortest trials in history. These criminals are usually caught red-handed, or are interrupted in the process of looting, robbing, raping and murdering innocent civilians. I heard the local hardware stores have donated hundreds of feet of rope to the local militias. I tell you, it's about time! Don't get me wrong here, we aren't hanging jaywalkers or drunks - just hardened violent criminals. Anyone guilty of a lesser crime, the punishment is decided by the local community. It can range from community service to getting horse-whipped. So far we haven't had any repeat offenders after getting horse whipped. I hate to tell you this, but for the immediate future, you're on your own. I'd suggest contacting neighbors since the virus has seemed to run its course. Don't trust anyone you don't know, because we are having a wave of refugees from Reno, NV and Sacramento California, and some of them might be infected. Anyone who has been in isolation for two weeks is considered safe."

"What about returning to work - most of us work at the mines."

"John for the duration of the emergency, we have closed any non-essential businesses to prevent any re-contamination of the population. Also we are restricting large gatherings for the same reason. When it's OK, we'll broadcast on KKKO radio."

"Thanks Sheriff, and if you need to reach us, we have a 2-meter ham, and post a listening watch on 146.00 Mhz."

"John, that's great - that's the same frequency I gave the militias for messages to or from the Sheriff's Office. Got to run, God Bless and Take care!"

After he hung up, John called Randy back, and explained the situation.

“John, should we form our own militia?”

“I’m not sure, we haven’t needed one so far, but I’d keep a listening watch on 146.00 Mhz, that’s the frequency the Sheriff is using to communicate with the militias. Their radio traffic will hopefully give us a heads-up if bad stuff is headed our way! How are you set for weapons and ammo.”

“Better than we were, we captured some SKS’s from the guys we killed, but we are way short on ammo.”

John thought for a second. “would a case of 7.62 x 39 ammo help?”

“Sure if you can spare it!”

“Not a problem, most of our rifles are .223 caliber or .308. I put aside a few cases for Alex’s AK-47, but we have enough to spare a case. I’ll drive it over tomorrow, now that the Sheriff says it’s ok to come out of hiding!”

“Great, I’ll see you then - I know, we can trade! I just butchered another steer, and I know with all those teenagers there you can probably use the meat.”

“Randy, that would be great! See you then!”

John walked down to the basement and talked to Bill. “How many cases of 7.62 x 39 did you bring with you?”

“I’ve got 3, but we don’t need them all since I’ll probably never need the AK-47. Why you ask?”

“Randy captured some SKS’s from the bad guys they killed, but doesn’t have any ammo for them, and was willing to trade some freshly butchered beef for a case. I’ve got 5 cases, and wanted to make sure we had enough if I traded them 1.”

“Sure, go ahead. If you need 1 of mine, let me know!”

When he finished talking to Bill, John had an idea. He walked up to Jennifer’s room.

“Honey, I have some great news!”

“Is it over Daddy?”

“Not exactly, but the Sheriff has said it is OK to meet people face to face you know and trust, and who have been in isolation for at least 2 weeks. I’m adding the restriction of no touching or close contact within 6 feet, and you both need to wear a gas mask!”

“Dad, I look like a DORK in a gas mask!”

“Maybe, but you’ll be a live Dork! I know several of your friends around here own horses, so you can have them come over, but I don’t have the gas to run you over there.”

Jennifer jumped up and hugged her dad, “Thanks Dad, you’re the greatest! I guess this means we can’t go to the mall or movies?”

“They closed all non-essential businesses for the duration of the emergency, so I highly doubt it! Anyway, if you go anywhere, take your FRS/GMRS radio with you, and your fanny pack with your Para-Ord pistol. You never know what you might run into!”

“OK, Dad, I’ll make sure I have it with me all the time”

“Just make sure you don’t take it off unless you are in the bathroom!”

John turned around, started to walk out of her room, turned around again, and realized his daughter had grown up before his eyes, not physically, but she was thinking like an adult instead of a child. John didn’t know if that was good or bad. He felt badly for Jennifer’s greatly shortened Childhood, but knew she’d be safer because of the lessons she’d learned. And what of Alex? His son was forced to kill another Human being when most teenagers were more worried about cars and girls! John said a quick prayer for his kids that God would take care of them, and allow them some time to be young again before they faced the full responsibility of Adulthood.

John shook off his melancholy, and tried to locate Sarah. She was outside in the garden weeding. John walked up quietly behind her, wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her neck. Sarah almost jumped out of her skin, then the familiar sensations of John’s scent and touch told her she was safe, and she snuggled back into his arms. John whispered in her ear “I love you Sarah! I just wanted you to know that!” They stood entwined for a few minutes, just enjoying the minute. Realizing that something was bothering John, Sarah turned around, held John’s face and asked him “what’s wrong?”

“Sarah, I’m worried about the kids, Jennifer and Alex are growing up too fast, and I’m afraid I’ve ruined their childhood!” John buried his face in Sarah’s shoulder and sobbed. Sarah held John tightly, then realized that this virus had scared John as badly as it had her, but for different reasons. John wasn’t one to show his emotions, except under severe stress, or when he was so drained he couldn’t hold it in. Sarah realized John was drained, and was leaning on her strength to rebuild his faith in the future.

When he was finished, Sarah told John “None of this was your fault - matter of fact, if it weren’t for everything you did for the last 20 years neither of our families would be alive now! Jennifer and Alex’s childhood may have been cut short due to some Raghead Terrorist Attack, but they will have a future, thanks to you! John, I love you now more than ever, and realize why you made all those hard decisions. Yes, sometimes I would have liked a new dress, or a new car, but my friends that bought the new dress or new car are all dead now, because they didn’t prepare! We’re alive because you kept your priorities straight, planned ahead, and went with what you knew was right, even when the going got tough. Alex and Jennifer are the best of both of us! Long after we’re gone, they’ll be alive with families of their own, and they will remember, and plan for the future, because we taught the well.”

John looked deeply into Sarah's eyes, and saw love there, but he also saw gratitude and respect. John saw what he needed, and felt better. He then gave Sarah a big hug, then explained what he had been doing all morning. Sarah agreed that making Jennifer wear a gas mask might make her look like a dork, but at least she'd be a live dork! They both got a good laugh at that.

John asked Sarah "How would you like to have a couple more just like Alex and Jennifer?"

"John, I'm getting a little old for that, but we can still practice!" John got one of THOSE grins, grabbed Sarah's hand, and led her into the house. They didn't come out of their bedroom until dinner. During dinner, Bill and Jean exchanged knowing glances between John and Sarah, and finally all the adults couldn't stop giggling, while the teenagers wondered what was so funny!

The next morning after breakfast, John went over to see Randy, he made sure the case of ammo was in the truck, and Sarah packed a box with a few extra things Randy's very pregnant wife might want. John drove on the ranch road between their ranches, opened the gate, and drove up to the main house. Randy greeted him at the door, and John handed him the case of ammo, which Randy nearly dropped. Amy came waddling into the living room, and took the box of baby things from John's arms. Even though they didn't need it, Sarah bought as many good used cloth diapers as she could find at the garage sales. She put as many as would fit in the box along with a jar of "shock-it" concentrated pool bleach granules and diluting instructions. That 5 pound plastic jar could make over 100 gallons of regular strength bleach when diluted with water. Amy told John to make sure he thanked Sarah, because she didn't have enough bleach or cloth diapers in stock. She had plenty of disposables, but not enough for several years use. With that, Randy went out to their walk-in freezer, and unloaded almost 100 pounds of freshly frozen beef into a cooler, and closed the lid. John helped Randy get it back into the truck. and Randy told John, "I don't know how to thank you, you and your wife have done so much for us! I wish there was more I could do to thank you!"

"Randy, what are friends and neighbors for. Now make sure you keep in touch, and since the virus has run its course, make sure you call us if you need help!"

"God Bless you John!"

Randy shook John's hand, and then John drove away. When he was out of sight, he squeezed a tube of Purell onto his hand, and "washed" both his hands. He wanted to be safe, but didn't want to be rude. Sarah made sure they always had a tube of Purell in their fanny packs, just in case. When he got back to the Ranch, Bill met him, and helped him carry in the beef. Sarah saw the size of the cooler, and was stunned wordless until they opened it, and she started reading the writing on the wrappings. "John, they gave us the choicest cuts of the steer - I've got a prime rib, 2 complete tenderloins, an entire rack of ribs, and several large rump roasts! I was expecting some hamburger, not all this!"

"Sarah, don't look a gift horse in the mouth, Randy wouldn't have given it to us if they couldn't afford it! After all, he did say he just slaughtered a Steer!"

"John, I just want to tell them thanks!"

“Sarah, Amy was practically crying when she saw the diapers and bleach! She said to make sure I told you thanks, so I feel the feeling is mutual. Tell you what, next time we go over there, you can give her some more stuff for the baby out of storage.”

Sarah hugged John, and whispered “Thanks dear!”

Chapter 28

Dateline Elko, June 2, 2008

John woke up to Jennifer yelling from her window that armed men were walking up the road and headed to the gate. John pulled his clothes on quickly, grabbed his fanny pack and pistol belt, then grabbed his radio “Red Alert, All Shifts - This is NOT a drill!” The ranch burst into controlled chaos as the people who were sleeping got dressed quickly, and the ones on guard duty rubbed the sleep out of their eyes and scanned their areas for intruders. Bill was on duty in the bunkhouse with his FA AK-47 and a 100 rd drum loaded. He too was scanning for targets, but all he could see were 6 men walking casually up the road talking and laughing. He got on the radio, “John, these guys don’t look like they’re looking for trouble, I’d stand down the Red Alert and go to Yellow Alert.”

John still hadn’t gotten a look at the group, so he decided to trust Bill’s judgment. “Stand Down from Red Alert, Go to Yellow Alert.” This kept Bill, Jennifer and Alex in position to spot, but got Sarah, Jean, JR and Lisa to the center of the house where it was safer. John picked up his loud-hailer and his FRS/GMRS radio and walked to the front door. Jennifer was still relaying the group’s position, and told her dad that the group had walked through the gate and was approaching the water hydrant. He threw on his Assault Vest with 20 loaded magazines for his M-1a National Match and some other stuff, and opened the door. He turned the volume up to the max on the loud-hailer, and broke squelch to get the group’s attention. When they looked up, John keyed the mike again and spoke “Stop, Stay where you are, make no sudden moves. You are under observation of several long range rifles, and if you make a threatening move, it will be your last! If however, you are friendly, slowly lower your rifles to the ground and step to the right at least 5 paces and wait.” John lowered the loud-hailer, and grabbed his binoculars, holding them to his eyes, he saw 6 very nervous men very carefully lower their rifles to the ground, and take 6 paces to the right in unison. John decided to take a chance. “If you have a FRS radio, tune it to channel 1.”

John tuned his FRS to channel 1 and waited a minute.

Finally his radio broke squelch, and then he heard “OK whoever you are, we complied - don’t shoot - Over”

John replied “Who are you and what do you want?”

“We’re the Lamoille Rancher’s Militia, Sheriff Johnson told us to patrol the area. We left our horses about a half mile back. We’re checking on all the ranches in the area to see if they’re OK. You must be John Mathews. Do you know the Williams from down the road?”

“You mean Dan and Becky Williams?”

“Yes, their son Bert is with us and you might recognize him, although he’s twenty years older than the last time you saw him.”

“OK if I verify this with the Sheriff - Don’t come any closer, but help yourselves to the water, I’ll

be back on Channel 1 in a few minutes.”

“Sure John - Thanks for the water!”

John re-set his radio to the GMRS band and entered 146 Mhz into the keypad. “Sheriff Johnson, this is John Mathews, do you read me, over.”

“Read you 5x5, go ahead.”

“Sheriff, do you know anything about a Lamoille Rancher’s Militia?”

“Sure do, they were one of the first ones I set up since you guys are so remote.”

“Is Bert Williams one of them?”

“Yeah, he’s one of the more active members, why all the questions?”

“I’ve got 6 armed men in my front yard claiming to be the Lamoille Ranch Militia.”

“Settle down John, they’re legit. They should be armed with hunting rifles and an SKS if I remember correctly.”

“Thanks Sheriff, Over and Out.”

John picked up his binoculars again and sure enough from what he could see they were armed with assorted bolt-action hunting rifles, and an SKS.

John switched back to channel 1 “Is Bert there?”

“Right here John, guess you talked to the Sheriff, sorry about the scare, but we didn’t know how to get hold of the ranchers, some of the phones are out now.”

“How long have you guys been in isolation?”

“Since the start of this, no one we know is sick either.”

“OK, walk carefully up the drive to the ranch house, we’ll talk in person.”

John switched channels “Stand down yellow alert, code green.”

A few minutes later, John was shaking the hands of a much relieved bunch of ranchers.

“Sorry about the rude welcome, but Sheriff Johnson said that there were some bad guys around.”

“That’s OK, at least you didn’t shoot!”

“Bert, I think you guys want to talk about the Militia and the situation around here. Is it OK if we invite Randy here?”

“Sure, the more the merrier - it will save us a long ride out to his place.”

John switched frequencies again. “Randy, you got your ears on?”

“John, this is Amy, what’s up?”

“No emergency, we just need Randy to come over here and meet some people. Is he handy?”

“He’s around here somewhere, let me try him on the radio, and if I get him, I’ll give him your frequency, OK?”

“Thanks, I’ll await Randy’s transmission, Over and Out.”

Several minutes later, Randy came on the radio, “John what’s up?”

“It looks like we are going to have a militia meeting after all, several members of the Lamoille Rancher’s Militia showed up unannounced and almost got ventilated!”

“Ok, I’ll be there right away, see you in half an hour.”

30 minutes later, Randy walked to the front door, and John opened it. When he got to the kitchen, John introduced everyone. “Randy, this is Bert, Jim, John, Jason, Jacob, and Jeremiah. They’re one of 3 squads of the Lamoille Rancher’s Militia.”

Randy said “I heard you gentlemen had an interesting reception?”

Bert spoke up, “You could say that, scared the crap out of me!” With that, the entire group laughed for a while. Then Bert told everyone what was going on, and what they were doing. They had decided to form a horseback posse, and they were going around to all the ranches and letting them know what was going on, and getting lists of anything they needed, or were willing to trade. Most of the families in the valley made it through ok, but a few were in Elko when the virus started to spread, and were killed by the virus, whole families wiped out!

“Bert, How many did we loose?”

“John, so far it seems we’ve lost 30 % of the residents.”

“What’s happening to their livestock?”

“So far their neighbors have been able to take care of them, that will change this winter, if we can’t get any alfalfa hay to feed them. Some of the bigger operations are facing bankruptcy if things don’t get back to normal soon.”

“How about any incidents of robbery or vandalism?”

“So far, not that many, the ranchers are fairly well armed, and we’re real isolated. Someone would really be desperate to come all the way out here.”

Randy told them about the attack on his ranch, then the failed attack on the Mathews Ranch.

“That’s why we need communications out here besides these dinky FRS radios or CB’s.”

“Bert, How many Ranchers are Hams?”

“Funny you should ask - we’ve been asking around, and enough ranchers are hams so we can cover all the ranches with a combination of FRS, GMRS, and Ham. Either of you two a Ham?”

“Matter of fact, we’re both licensed Technicians. We got our licenses at the same time. We’ve both got 50 watt 2-meter transceivers.”

“Great, we printed a list of frequencies and times for Health and Welfare checks, as well as a list of emergency frequencies, and a duty roster for radio watch.”

“We keep a radio watch from sunup to sundown. I think Randy does the same.”

Randy’s vigorous nodding confirmed it.

“We also own several FRS/GMRS rigs we use for ranch communications, as well as a FRS/GMRS base station. We can relay emergency traffic to either the militia or the Sheriff.”

“You two want to join the militia?”

“Depends, do we have to patrol outside our ranches?”

“No, we’re going to cut back on patrolling as soon as all the ranches have been checked, and notified. IF you guys could assist nearby ranchers with emergencies, we’d appreciate it.”

John looked at Randy, who nodded. “OK, we’ll do it!”

Bert turned his HT on, set it to 146 Mhz, and called the Sheriff. “Sheriff Johnson, we have 2 more militia members to deputize. John Mathews and Randy Jones.”

“Great, Gentlemen, raise your right hand and repeat after me. Do you swear to faithfully carry out the duties appointed to you, and support and defend the Constitution of Nevada?”

Both John and Randy answered in the affirmative.

“By the powers invested in me as Sheriff of Elko County and for the duration of this emergency, I hereby deputize you both as County Militia Members. You now have powers of arrest and detention if necessary. Thank you gentlemen. Try not to shoot anyone unless you have to!”

As soon as the Sheriff disconnected, Bert explained the situation. “You heard the Sheriff; you now are members of the militia and subject to the orders of those appointed above you, namely me and the Sheriff, or any lawfully appointed Deputy Sheriff. You are authorized to carry weapons and use them in the performance of your duties. You are also subject to the emergency regulations set down by Governor Russell and signed by Sheriff Johnson. Do what you can to protect the innocent and private property, but don’t risk your lives unnecessarily. We’ll get together on

the radio once a week, and in person as needed. Any Questions?"

"Does this mean we are subject to emergency call-up for duty outside of Lamoille?"

"NO, neither of you is subject to call-up outside Lamoille - every area has it's own militia, and is capable of defending themselves."

"Are there any weapons restrictions?"

"If you have any unregistered Full Auto or suppressed weapons we'd rather not know about them. Bring anything you feel you need and enough ammo for an extended firefight if you get called up. We are recommending a rifle in either .308, 30-06 or .223 since we've got plenty of ammo for those calibers from the NG armory. Semi-autos are preferred, but if all you have is a hunting rifle, that's better than nothing."

"Are we expected to regularly perform duties outside of our ranches?"

"We don't anticipate that - we really needed you two for your radio abilities and gear. We think a radio network will be more valuable than a bunch of roving patrols."

Chapter 29

Dateline: Elko, NV June 3 2008

After Breakfast Sarah and Jean went down into the basement, and pulled out boxes of stuff, and loaded them into the pickup. When John asked her where she was going, they said they were going to deliver some stuff to Amy. John just nodded - he knew better than to get in the way of 2 women who had their minds made up. Before they left, Sarah called Amy on the radio and said they were coming over with some stuff. Amy said she couldn't wait to see them. Since everyone had been quarantined for at least 2 weeks, John knew the risk was minimal, still he took Sarah aside and asked that they keep the womanly hugging etc. to a minimum. Sarah laughed and told John not to worry - and he said "It's my job to worry about your safety!" Sarah and Jean jumped into the pickup, and were at Randy and Amy's house inside half an hour (it took them longer to get the gate between their properties opened and closed - it's heavy!)

Finally they arrived at their ranch, Amy and Randy helped them unload the truck, then Amy asked them to stay for lunch. Sarah didn't see the harm. Once they got settled and talking, Amy had the idea of starting a Women's Auxiliary to the Lamoille Ranch Militia. It would work as a network between the ranch wives, to make sure everyone got taken care of, and to act as a barter system between the ranches. If you had TP and needed sugar, you could trade it, or barter for something else you needed. Why should the guys have all the fun! Sarah and Jean thought it was an excellent idea. Amy called for Randy, who was hiding in the parlor to stay out of the way. Amy asked him how many ranches they were in touch with. Randy said between his radio and John's they could reach 2/3 of the valley, and the ones on the extreme fringes could relay messages to the further outlying ranches. When Randy told them that - it was settled. All 3 women started making lists of stuff they wanted, and stuff they had.

Sarah already knew how to use their 2 meter, since John insisted she get her Technician license. Randy had a list of frequencies and times for regular transmissions for the Militia. Sarah decided to use the next transmission scheduled for 15 minutes from now, to invite all the ranch wives to join the Women's Auxiliary. When it was time, Sarah got on the radio, and transmitted "This is KB3DDO Kilo Bravo Three Delta Delta Oscar with routine traffic for the Lamoille Ranch Militia. This is an open invitation to all the Ranch wives to join a Women's Auxiliary, and to help your fellow ranch wives, and set up a barter system. Anyone interested please call back on this frequency at 1450. Anyone on the fringes of Lamoille please contact the outlying remote ranches and pass the word. KB3DDO Kilo Bravo Delta Delta Oscar -Clear."

"Now all we have to do is see if anyone calls back at 1450!"

The time seemed to drag, Randy left the Ham radio in receive in case there was some incoming traffic. Finally at 1449, the frequency was so jammed with incoming calls that Sarah got on the air and asked all the women to go alphabetically by last name at 5 minute intervals. Jean and Amy took notes as the various wives called in. Some were experienced operators, others had just picked up the microphone for the first time. Several hours later, when all the calls were logged, they had over 70 new members of the Women's Auxiliary! Sarah, Jean and Amy were amazed at the lists of stuff wanted and stuff people had. It would take a day or two to coordinate. Since

Amy was due any day now - she was excused from running the barter system, so that left Sarah and Jean. Sarah looked at her watch and told Amy they needed to be heading back, and after a quick hug, they got back into the pickup and drove back to the ranch. When they got out, John was waiting for Sarah.

“I guess you heard what we said on the radio?”

“I thought it was an excellent idea, and I wish someone had thought of it sooner!”

“We did, we just didn’t know there were that many Hams in the valley!”

“Sarah, remember why I told you to get your Technician License?”

“That’s right - you said most of the ranches had at least a 2 meter Ham Radio!”

“Randy and I use our FRS/GMRS radios because we are just in range of each other, and we don’t want the entire county listening in like they could on a 2-meter transmission at high power. We still have the 2 meter in case we need to call someone else. As you can see, even a 5-watt Handy Talkie on the correct frequency can talk to the Sheriff’s Office. The local Amateur Radio Club put in a bunch of repeaters, so now anyone on 2-meter in the County can talk to anyone else that can hit a repeater. With A Yagi antenna, you can easily double or triple the range from a base station to a repeater as long as you have line-of-sight to the repeater.

Chapter 30

Dateline Elko June 30, 2008

Governor Russell was on the telephone with President Schwarzenegger.

“Governor Russell, I just spoke to the head of the CDC, and he assures me that the virus has run its course, there have been no reported infections in two weeks. I’m still going to restrict interstate travel to essential business only to limit contact for the next 30 days to make certain, but you can resume normal activities again. I understand you have managed to restart your infrastructure - how did you manage?” “Mr. President, the People of Nevada and Utah were better prepared than your average American. I can give some credit to the Mormon Church, since they insist that their members have 1 year’s worth of food on hand, and they usually go beyond that to have a large stockpile of essential supplies as well. This preparedness attitude tends to rub off on their neighbors, at least the rural ones. Our cities didn’t fare as well as the rural counties did, but we got the National Guard units in quickly to restore order, and provide medical care. Lots of churches had stockpiles of food and other essentials that they donated to those who were without. Our population is spread over a vast area, so once the rural people isolated themselves, the spread of the virus halted. Your shipping those filter masks allowed us to cut weeks off the timeline for getting stuff running, since we had enough so all the essential workers were protected 100%. Since there was no real damage, everything just needed basic maintenance, and then they started everything back up. The only real problem we had was replacing all the doctors and nurses who had died from the virus. Luckily, we had a huge medical facility at the Fallon Naval Air Base, and they volunteered to man essential medical facilities. We’re not 100% yet, but I understand we are in far better shape than other states. If they need assistance, please let me know!”

“Thanks for the offer, but they’re doing better now that the virus has run its course. If anyone asks for help, I’ll make sure to let you know!”

“Mr. President - what we need most is for interstate trucking companies to resume deliveries of foodstuffs to the grocery stores, some of the cities are really hurting, and the food banks have almost run out!”

“OK, governor, I’ll include food, medical and other essential consumer goods shipments in the allowable travel lists. I’ll have to get the trucking companies to certify that they are free of virus first. Otherwise I don’t see a problem. I’ll try to get them rolling today or tomorrow!”

“Thank you Mr. President!”

Several hours later, Sarah was listening to the radio, when the announcer said they had an important announcement from Governor Russell. Sarah called everyone into the kitchen to hear the announcement.

“Citizens of Nevada, I have good news. I just got off the phone with President Schwarzenegger, and he told me the CDC has declared the virus to be over. He has asked the people of the United States to resume normal activities. The only restriction is that there is no interstate travel for 30

days. The President wanted to restrict travel just to make sure. I asked him to exempt deliveries of food, medicine and essential consumer goods, and he agreed. Within a week, the groceries should have food and other essential items. I'd like to ask Nevadans to make today a day of prayer, both for the loss of so many people, and thanksgiving that it is finally over. Take Care and God Bless."

Sarah and John hugged each other, then John looked at Bill, "Hate to give you bad news, but you're stuck here for another 30 days!"

"John, could be worse, we could be still stuck in that cabin in Truckee!"

John called work to check in, and they said to report on Monday, that it would take a couple of days to get stuff started again. His supervisor asked him if he knew anyone who would be interested in working for the mine, especially diesel mechanics. John thought about Bill, but was evasive since he didn't want to tip his hand. John made a few calls, and found out the ranch next to him was available - it seems the owners were among the deceased. The bank needed someone to take over payments, and was offering it for far below market. John knew the president of the bank, and made another call. Then he talked to Bill.

"Bill, remember the Mafia movies where they make you an offer you can't refuse? Well, I've got one for you - the mine I'm working for needs to hire a bunch of people, and they need a diesel mechanic real bad - and it pays almost twice what you were making in Sacramento."

"Great, but where are we going to live?"

"That's the best part - the ranch next door is on the market - the rancher died from the virus while he was visiting relatives in California. The bank needs someone to take over payments. I called the president of the bank, and asked what they were asking - it's way below market. I explained I had a buyer for him, who would want the property for that price. I explained you needed to sell your house to afford it, and could pay the balance in full out the proceeds of your house. He checked my account, and asked if I minded putting \$10K down against the proceeds of your house. I agreed conditionally, saying it was up to you, but if you want it, it's yours!"

Bill jumped up and gave his brother a big hug. "Of course I want it, I've been trying to get out of the People's Republic of California for years!"

John called the banker back, and asked him to start processing the paperwork, then he called the supervisor of the mine, who said that Bill could start Monday with John. He'd make sure they were on the same shift. John put Bill on the phone, and the supervisor asked him a few questions, then told him how much they could pay him. They offered over twice what he was making in Sacramento. As soon as he hung up, he gave John another big hug "Thanks Brother! Not only did you save our bacon a couple of months ago, but now you found us a way out of the PRC with a new job and a new house!"

Bill ran downstairs to give Jean the good news. John told Sarah, Alex and Jennifer. They had a celebratory dinner that night. Bill went to work for the mine, and 30 days later, sold their house in Sacramento, packed up their belongings, and moved into the ranch next door. The two fami-

lies were even closer, since Jean and Sarah shared the homeschooling duties for both families. Even though she didn't attend the local high school, the school board allowed home schooled children to participate in athletics and social events. Jennifer got to go to her Senior Prom after all, and Sarah kept the pictures in her scrapbook. Alex enlisted in the Army, and was assigned to the Army rifle team, and later became an instructor for the shooting school. Jennifer went to Veterinarian School, and became a local vet upon graduation. JR got a good paying job at the mine, and married one of the nearby rancher's daughters. Lisa was the last one to leave the nest, and finally decided she wanted to be a social worker, and got a job in town after she graduated.

Governor Russell retired from public office after 2 successful terms as Governor, and went back to his ranch. Arnold was re-elected by a landslide in the next election, and the Democratic Party basically folded. No one messed with the USA for the next 20 years.

The End